

MANY VOICES – ONE SONG
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CURRICULAR ISSUES
AND LEARNING STYLES IN MULTIFAITH EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

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Globalization gives us the ability to connect with almost any remote part of the world. With globalization Americans have come into close contact with people of diverse cultures and religions. However, recent events have resulted in many Americans being misinformed and harboring a lack of trust and bias feelings toward members of other faith traditions.

As religious educators, I believe it is our mandate from Yahweh to teach others how to locate and use knowledge that has been lost to us. Curriculum must be created that will increase understanding of other faith traditions. Religious education today must include knowledge of other faith traditions in order for peace to prevail in our world.

I serve as curriculum developer for the *Bible Walk* Christian Education Course at The Riverside Church located in the diverse Morningside Heights section of New York City. Riversiders are experiencing a disconnection between the biblical text of the Hebrew Bible and how some sites in Israel and Judaism have informed both the Hebrew and New Testaments. I have created an anthropological approach to curriculum issues and learning styles that introduce American Christians to the theological implications of Judaism and the land of Israel.

For my parents

Esther and Eugene Maquishon

and

my grandparents

Anesta and James Farrell

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*“We are rapidly entering an axial time,
a new age which may well be decisive
for humanity and the earth.*

*It will be an age unlike any other
in the issues it will resolve,
in the direction it assumes,
in the consciousness that guides it,
and in the truly global civilization it will fashion.”¹*

Joel Beversluis

...for a time such as this

¹ Joel Beversluis, ed., *Sourcebook of the World's Religions: An Interfaith Guide to Religion and Spirituality* (Navato, California: New World Library, 2000), ix.

INTRODUCTION

“Think not you understand anything until you pass the test
of perfect peace, for peace and understanding go together
and can never be found alone.”²

Peter Bridgewater

It was a lovely late summer morning. It was a busy morning. It was primary day in New York State. The school year had just begun in the New York City Public School system. I was at the front of my new fifth grade class. As was my habit in the first few weeks of the school year, I was trying to teach class routines to the children who were so attentively listening to me. The discussion centered on auditorium etiquette. “Sit with your hands folded.” “Do not kick the seat in front of you; keep your feet flat on the floor.” “Do not talk when you are being given instructions.”

One child’s parent knocked on the door and rushed in stating that she had come to pick up her child. She had a frightened look on her face. I concluded that it must be a family emergency and not wanting to share this information with the rest of the class, I did not ask her what the matter was. I helped my student pack her things. I tried to give her homework, but her mother did not seem to think that homework was important at the time. I knew the situation was serious then. Parents usually asked for the child’s

² Peter Bridgewater, *Meditations From a Course in Miracles* (New York: Metro Books, 2007),x.

homework if they have to pick a child up early from school.

I began my lesson again. There was another knock on my classroom door. I became annoyed. Those were the days before early morning time in the classroom was considered sacred and it became off limits to unnecessarily disturb a class before the fourth or fifth period. I thought that this was just one more unessential disturbance. But it wasn't. Another mother rushed into the classroom requesting her son.

She did not wait for the child to pack or to gather his belongings. She grabbed him, and speaking frantically in Spanish tried to run out of the door. But she was almost knocked down by a grandmother followed by a babysitter. There were no apologies or explanations. These caregivers did not bother to say anything to me which was very unusual. They called the children out of the classroom and ran. I stuck my head out of the classroom to try to ask them what the problem was but I never got the words out. In the hall were several parents and caregivers running into other classrooms asking for their charges. I knew then there was a problem.

Several of my colleagues stuck their heads out of their classrooms and asked what was going on. The parents would not answer. They were scared and moving quickly. Finally, an announcement came over the loud speaker. All students and their teachers were to come down to the auditorium. The children were to bring their belongings.

It would be in the back of the auditorium that the teachers gathered with the principal who told us what had just happened. The date was Tuesday September 11, 2001.

Chapter 1

The Challenge

In this new ecological age of developing global community and interfaith dialogue, the world religions face what is perhaps the greatest challenge that they have ever encountered. Each is inspired by a unique vision of the divine and has a distinct cultural identity. At the same time, each perceives the divine as the source of unity and peace. The challenge is to preserve their religious and cultural uniqueness without letting it operate as a cause of narrow and divisive sectarianism that contradicts the vision of divine unity and peace. It is a question whether the healing light of religious vision will overcome the social and ideological issues that underlie much of the conflict between religions.³

Dr. Steven C. Rockefeller

In the days and weeks following September 11, 2001, the American people would be told by their political officials that factions from Iraq had attacked the United States. Americans were told that a religious group was responsible for the violence visited on us. There were sermons written and preached by Christian clergy that professed that Iraqis were demonic. This would not be the first time that fanatics and

³ Joel Beversluis, ed., *Sourcebook of the World's Religions: An Interfaith Guide to Religion and Spirituality* (Navato, California: New World Library, 2000), ix.

fundamentalists would have given religion a bad name. History will testify to the fact that religion has been the catalyst for many wars and acts of violence throughout the centuries in most places in the world. Political leaders, with hidden agendas, have used and exploited religious communities in order to foster intolerance, suspicion, hatred as well as violence against members of religious communities. Religious people while professing love and peace can be warriors.⁴ When you add to this the belief that God is on their side, religious zealots are often very violent.⁵

There are orthodox religions that can be conservative in their beliefs. The word “orthodox” means “right thinking”. Many religious schools do not allow their beliefs concerning God to be critically analyzed. The goal of orthodox schools is to shape the thinking of others. They do not entertain doubts when it comes to their religious beliefs.

Our faith traditions have great influence over our beliefs and our behaviors.⁶ One’s theology will be informed by their faith tradition, the scholars that they read as well as those that they do not read, that are left out of their theology, their culture and history.⁷

There are faith communities that expect blind obedience to their dogma and

⁴ John H. Bethrong, *The Divine Deli: Religious Identity in the North American Cultural Mosaic* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 47 – 69.

⁵ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus’ Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 207 – 210, 220 – 224, 226 – 227, 235 - 238.

⁶ Ibid., 333 – 335.

⁷ Terence E. Frothier, “Exodus 3: A Theological Interpretation”, in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl, (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 40.

creeds from their adherents. They do not want their followers to ask questions, wrestle with theological issues or to challenge tradition. There are those clergy that have effectively told their congregants that when it comes to God, they will tell them what to think and what to believe.⁸ They discourage their congregants from engaging in theological critical thinking.

Some American Christians, under the influence of their clergy, did not behave like Christians following September 11th. As followers of Christ, we have to unlearn some of the dogma that we have been taught. There are many good Christians who do not know what to think or believe about what really happened on that day. Their only source of information is what the news tabloids told them. Suspicion, mistrust, and misunderstanding of members of other faith traditions than their own, have been fueled by newspapers, television, and other media. They only know what their public officials have told them. They need correct information. What is true is always relative to the perspective of each individual.⁹ Everyone has their own version of the truth given our humanity.¹⁰ Religion can be used as a mechanism by which to control people while professing its own perspective of truth.¹¹ Instead of religion leading us to peace, religion was leading us to war.

⁸ Charles Kimball, "Hope for the Perilous Journey Ahead: Obstacles and Opportunities for the Children of Abraham" (The William and Rita Lecture, University of Tulsa, September 29, 2003).

⁹ Judith Berling, *Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 12.

¹⁰ John H. Berthrong, *The Divine Deli: Religious Identity in the North American Cultural Mosaic* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 47 – 69.

¹¹ Kate McCarthy, *Interfaith Encounters in America* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 10.

Ideology can be viewed as a set of valued beliefs.¹² One group of people can dominate another group of people through ideology. Ideology is seen as the way the institution actually functions and how it shapes peoples values and world views. When an ideology becomes dominate it can become hegemonic.¹³ Politics is the art of influence. Hegemony is leadership or dominant influence exercised by one nation over another or one culture over another culture. It is the art of aggression and expansion by a large nation over smaller nations. Hegemony is fuelled by injustice, oppression, exclusion, racism as well as political, economic and cultural reasons. Justice is a prerequisite for peace. We remember the slogan “No Justice, No Peace”.

The hegemonic ideology maintains control by legitimizing the status quo. It supports social and cultural patterns of society.

“As liberation theologians have argued, we must be diligent in undertaking an analysis of the mechanism of power and counter power symbolic and material—by which the rhizomes of traditions are formed.”¹⁴

It causes one to believe that the present thought patterns are universal, natural, and correct. Some ideologies even go so far as to insinuate that they are God ordained.¹⁵ These ideologies deny and ignore the experiences of women, the poor, and people of

¹² Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (New York: MacMillan College Publishing Company, 1985), 49 – 51.

¹³ Randi Jones Walker, *The Evolution of a UCC Style: Essays in the History, Ecclesiology, and Culture of the United Church of Christ* (Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 2005), 39.

¹⁴ Dale T. Irvin, *Christian Histories, Christian Traditioning – Rendering Accounts* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 138.

¹⁵ Charles Kimball, “Hope for the Perilous Journey Ahead: Obstacles and Opportunities for the Children of Abraham” (The William and Rita Lecture, University of Tulsa, September 29, 2003).

color. Ideologies have a consequence for the quality of life people will live.¹⁶ A

hegemonic ideology tries to make the world over into the way it sees life.

Hegemony is also at play in many churches leading to religious imperialism.¹⁷

We need better understanding of how our inherited institutional forms of religious education are related to the massive political, economic, social, and cultural structures of our societies. Clearer analysis of these relationships that make us instruments of the hegemonic ideology of those structures might help us develop better ways of doing our educational tasks.¹⁸

Some religions have taught that certain races of people are superior to other races of people or that certain races are allowed to oppress other races because they have been God ordained to do so. There are faith communities in the United States that demonstrate in their instructional methodologies core ideologies and world views that are repressive to people who are not Caucasian, or male with Western philosophies.¹⁹

The Western mindset concerning other cultures has caused a hegemonic view of these cultures and has influenced how we respond to them politically, economically, and socially.²⁰ Political control leads to cultural control and cultural identity distortions.

¹⁶ Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (New York: MacMillan College Publishing Company, 1985), 52 - 55.

¹⁷ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 162 – 163.

¹⁸ William B. Kennedy, “Ideology and Education: A Fresh Approach for Religious Education”, *Religious Education*. Volume 80, Number 3. (Summer, 1985), 342.

¹⁹ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 112.

²⁰ Randi Jones Walker, *The Evolution of a UCC Style: Essays in the History, Ecclesiology, and Culture of the United Church of Christ* (Cleveland, Ohio; United Church Press, 2005), 40.

Cultural power is associated with the political power to dominate. The way the Western world views other civilizations is a product of the imagination of the west. Often the view of other civilizations is a colonial Western mindset that has huge ramifications on politics, justice, and economics.

Many Americans are still in the dark as to what road to take in order to ascertain the truth as to why we were attacked on September 11, 2001. However, as Christians, we are to remember that not knowing doesn't absolve us from the command of Jesus Christ to be peacemakers and agents of reconciliation.

“Despite all the pomp and circumstance permeating the Church today, the truth is that Jesus didn't found an institution, he started a movement...Jesus simply taught the men and women who heeded his call to put their love for God into practice by loving neighbors as themselves.”²¹

Peace in our global society is based on justice, and respect for the fundamental rights of others.²² Human beings have the right to live without fear, the right to practice the faith tradition of their choice, as well as political, cultural and economic rights. All religious traditions should teach their followers to engage in such reflections.

Globalization gives us the ability to connect with almost any remote part of the world.²³ With globalization Americans have come into close contact with people of diverse cultures and religions.²⁴ Change has come swiftly and in many cases too fast for

²¹ Obery M. Hendricks Jr., *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 101 – 102.

²² Henry Giroux et al., *Curriculum and Instructions: Alternatives in Education* (Berkeley: McCutchan, 1981), 120.

²³ Thomas L. Friedman, “While I was Sleeping”, in *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty – First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 16.

²⁴ R. Marie Griffith, “Beyond Diversity and Multiculturalism: Pluralism and the Globalization of

us to adjust to the changes.²⁵ Many times we do not understand the political and economic ramifications of our new world.²⁶ Globalization has a moral component that makes it necessary for those in power to enhance the world and ensure human dignity.

As a society, our new dilemma is that of religious pluralism. With the events of September 11th, it became an immediate necessity to understand the faith beliefs of other religious communities.²⁷ This dilemma has many of the components that Americans faced when dealing with race relations. Americans cannot think that being tolerant of other faith communities is enough. We must also respect, and have some knowledge of the tenets of other faith communities.

The United States is a pluralistic society.²⁸ In such a society there exist pluralistic ideologies. These ideologies may come in conflict with one another. Ideologies which do not allow for the existence of other world perspectives must be exposed and new patterns of thought must be allowed to emerge.

Christian education today must be multifaith. Having some knowledge of other religious faiths helps us to understand Christianity fuller. It encourages us to feel like members of the larger world's faith communities. This goes beyond tradition and dogma.

American Religion". OAH Magazine of History (January 2008), 32.

²⁵ Thomas L. Friedman, "While I was Sleeping", *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty – First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 17.

²⁶ Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Continuum International Publishers, 2003), 20 - 22.

²⁷ Juli Cragg Hilliard, "The Quest for Understanding: Exploring Religions Common Threads", *Publisher's Weekly. Religious Update* (March 24, 2003), 42.

²⁸ Jonathan Sacks, *The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society* (London, U. K and U. S.: Cromwell Press, 2007), 8 – 12.

Americans need to have a safe place in order to get correct information about the “other”. We need to be adequately educated about our neighbors. We need to learn to respect the beliefs of others without thinking that our way is the only right way. We live in a world of religious pluralism. We need a bridge that will lead us into the religious world of the “other” in order to discover their stories, values, and traditions. The more we know about each other the less likely we will be to demonize each other.

In turn, Christians must be able to share their stories. This must be done without the arrogant mindset that their tradition is the only one that is true and correct. American Christians must be anchored in their own faith narratives and at the same time be open to the wisdom in the stories of others. They must be open to the possibility that the other will reveal the face of God to them. After engaging in the world of the “other”, American Christians will return to Christianity with a richer and stronger faith. The Holy Spirit has been sent to help and lead us. As we encounter other religions, we should invoke the Holy Spirit to guide us.

A pneumatological theology of religions may in fact assist in reducing feelings of religious or cultural superiority vis – a – vis those in other faiths and promote a humble and Christ – like attitude, thereby allowing genuine interreligious communication and the sharing of the gospel to proceed.²⁹

With good religious instruction, American Christians can become aware of what their responsibilities are to their neighbors and what God expects from them regarding the treatment of their fellow man. Human beings are capable of learning skills and techniques that can transform their heads and hearts from thoughts of war to thoughts of

²⁹ Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal – Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religion* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 63.

peace. It is the responsibility of the Christian church to provide such a safe place and such teachings. A multifaith curriculum can be constructed that can fill this void that exist in most American Christian churches.

Using various sacred texts, Christian educators can strive to show people ways of thinking that can help them understand the “others” that live in their area and beyond. Peace is justice. Respect for the rights of others, is essential for proper human growth and happiness. Peace has such components as freedom, truth and stability. It includes the development of the whole person.

Peace is dependent on our having some knowledge of one another. In our pluralistic world we are interdependent. We must have relationships with one another that are holy and loving. We must not simply tolerate each other.³⁰ We must freely accept the others’ differences which go beyond our simply tolerating the differences.

Many wars are fought in the name of the Creator. Is a lack of knowledge of the tenets of other faith traditions a contributing factor to some wars? Can knowledge of other faith traditions be a catalyst to transformation of the minds and hearts of American Christians? What form could that knowledge take?

Different names may be used for the Creator by different faith groups but most faith groups are referring to the one and only God. Most of the sacred texts of these faith groups teach similar lessons to their followers concerning the treatment of their fellow man and their responsibilities to the Creator. If members of different spiritual groups were to know more about each other’s sacred texts and spiritual beliefs, they would

³⁰ Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 70.

recognize many of the principals in the sacred texts of others that are in their sacred texts and acknowledge principles that they also believe.

It is my hope that with more information people will begin to respect the beliefs of spiritual groups that are different than theirs. Can a multifaith curriculum that introduces American Christians to various faith traditions result in less fear of and demonization of members of other faith traditions by American Christians?

As Christians, our Bible states that God commands us to love one another. Can engaging in the study of other faith traditions result in American Christians understanding their own tradition better and deepen their relationship with God? Is it possible, that through the study of other faith traditions, American Christians can learn the other has a story and can recognize a common humanity with shared values, without fearing that their own beliefs are threatened? Can American Christians engage in the study of other faith traditions and learn to appreciate beliefs that they share and accept theologies and perspectives that are different without betraying their own beliefs and their Christian identity?

Just learning about other faith traditions is not enough. The Christian claim of superior culture in relation to their assumption of the basic weakness, ignorance and corruption of other religious cultures usually break down with actual contact with members of other faith communities. A faith based education for adults must be anthropological³¹ in theory and practice thereby addressing the needs of both adult males and females. It must incorporate the theories and practices of andragogy. It must allow

³¹ See “anthropo-” in The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles, Lesley Brown, ed. Volume 1, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 87.

space for differences in the learning styles of the participants. It must allow participants the use of their senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch in order to connect in a more personal way to their global family. Can an anthropological approach to the formation of curriculum for teaching literacy in a multifaith genre be created? This is my goal.

In the pages that follow I will present components of an anthropological approach to curriculum issues as they address learning styles in multifaith education. Now this tool can be used to introduce any faith tradition. What is of importance are the components and the method of instruction. This particular course included notes on Judaism and a 26 session curriculum in a PowerPoint format.

First, I will state why I believe that this curriculum is important for the times in which we live.³² I will present some of my thoughts on sacred texts, names for God and multifaith education. I will discuss the location of my work and how it was done. Then I will share my thoughts on curriculum design for American Christian churches and the curriculum that I created. Finally, I will discuss the results of my work.

Peace is more than just the absence of war. War does not come from weapons of mass destruction. War originates in the hearts of men. Education is one of the keys to world peace.³³ However, just learning about other faith traditions is not enough. We must connect personally with members of other cultures as well as other faith traditions. It is my hope that this knowledge will lead to less hatred of the “other”.

³² Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 159 – 167.

³³ Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 15 - 17.

Chapter 2

What I Believe

“The sheep always know the voice of the shepherd! More important, just like our mothers told us, ‘The truth will set you free!’ The truth will bring you back to the place you started as a divine idea in the mind of God.”³⁴

Iyanla Vanzant

All human beings are related. We are all members of one family. I believe that the Creator is our single origin. Peace is a lifestyle that is intended for all men and women. In order to know God better, we must know each other better - for God is in all of us.

“In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.”

(Genesis 1 : 1)³⁵

The word Trinity is not found in the Bible. When I speak of God, I am referring to the Trinity. God is three distinct persons in one entity. There is only one true God. God is a spirit.

³⁴ Iyanla Vanzant, *One Day My Soul Just Opened Up* (New York: Fireside, 1998), 25.

³⁵ All First Testament texts will come from the Interlinear NIV Hebrew – English Old Testament unless otherwise noted.

“God (is) spirit, and the (ones) worshipping Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4 : 24)³⁶

God is the creator of all things. One God is the Creator of all human beings. God is a merciful being. God is a forgiving being. God loves all human beings completely. The Scriptures tell us that God wishes us to have “shalom”. This Hebrew word means peace. It also means that nothing is missing or not perfectly functional. Peace is not passive acceptance of living without violence. It is not simply tolerating the others that are different from us. God wants us to actively commit to loving one another. Since humans are made in the image of God, God would only want for humans characteristics that God possess.

God is concerned with every detail of our lives and wants to be part of every aspect of our lives. It is for this reason that God has provided humankind with many names for Themselves. Each name reveals a characteristic of God. Each name reveals a relationship between human beings and God.

“I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14).

This name of God reveals one of God’s most fulfilling characteristic. Our heavenly Father /Mother knows our deepest needs even before we are aware of them. “I Am” is whatever we need God to be at that moment. “I Am” is not some stiff unyielding god. He/She can provide for our every need and can meet us at the point of that need.

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, possesses a dual nature.³⁷ He is fully God

³⁶ All Second Testament text will come from the Interlinear Greek – English New Testament (literal translation) unless otherwise noted.

³⁷ Jacques Dupuis, S. J., *Who Do You Say I Am: Introduction to Christology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 93 – 94.

and fully man. God's divine nature became flesh. The human nature became divine. This union is in one body. The Word became flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. In Mary's womb, Jesus' human nature began to develop and grow. I believe that the Holy Spirit was the catalyst that helped to bring about the development of the divine nature of Jesus in one body with His human nature.

Jesus' theological proclamations demonstrated that He possesses the authority of the Creator. He was intimate with the Creator.³⁸ It was only through this intimacy that Jesus was able to preach and teach with power. Jesus prayed frequently. In the quietness of solitude He was able to hear the Father/Mother's voice.

Christ was sensitive to the needs of people.³⁹ He used "common occasions" to minister to people. When He ministered to the blind and the handicapped, He did it at the point of their need. Jesus Christ is a compassionate God who preached a theology of empowerment for the people on the fringes of society.⁴⁰

Jesus' incarnation and lowly birth reminds us that He identifies with all humankind.⁴¹ Instead of appearing on earth as a ruler or a king, He came in the body of a helpless child. Jesus introduced us to a love centered spiritual experience.⁴² He taught us

³⁸ Jacques Dupuis, S. J., *Who Do You Say I Am: Introduction to Christology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 46 – 51, 69 - 73.

³⁹ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 101 – 112.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 113 - 131.

⁴¹ Jacques Dupuis, S. J. *Who Do You Say I Am: Introduction to Christology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 65 - 69.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 5.

to love our neighbors just as we love ourselves. This does not mean that we should only love those who are like us or that think like us or that worship God in the same manner we do.⁴³ We are to love all the people of the world. Jesus came to the earth to be a servant to mankind. John 13 : 4 – 5 testifies to this.

“He rose up from the supper and laid aside (His) garments. And taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He put water into the basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe off with the towel with which He was girded.”

Jesus was a revolutionary.⁴⁴ He refused to conform to the religious or political structures that oppressed and exploited the less fortunate.⁴⁵ He had great compassion for human suffering. Jesus held the church responsible for addressing the needs of the people they were designated to care for.⁴⁶ The teachings and ministry of Christ were primarily aimed at the people whose material needs was not sufficient to sustain life in a decent manner.⁴⁷ Luke 4 : 18 – 19 makes this clear. Christ states...

(The) Spirit of (the) Lord (is) upon Me. Because of this He anointed Me to proclaim the gospel to (the) poor; He has sent Me to heal the (ones) broken (in) heart, to preach deliverance, to captives and to (the) blind to see again, to send away (the ones) having been crushed in deliverance, to proclaim an

⁴³ Jacques Dupris, *Who Do You Say I Am*, 319 – 320.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁵ Obery M. Hendricks. *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 132 – 144.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 249 - 255.

⁴⁷ Jacques Dupuis, S. J. *Who Do You Say I Am: Introduction to Christology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 44 - 46.

acceptable year of (the) Lord.

Jesus functioned on the earth in the capacity of a teacher and a peacemaker. Like many other revolutionaries⁴⁸ of His time, Christ went up into the hills above the Sea of Galilee to teach. There He instructed his followers. His message was one of making people free through the love and mercy of God. He taught that salvation was at hand for all that are seekers of truth. He taught on justice. Christ was a champion for all those who were treated unfairly.

Christ abhorred the way the religious sect of Israel treated some of the people.⁴⁹ Christ taught His followers to live in peace with one another. He taught us to love each other.

“You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy;” but I say to you, Love your enemies; bless those cursing you, do well to those hating you; and pray for those abusing and persecuting you,”
(Matthew 5 : 43 – 44).

Jesus the Christ practiced theology in His local setting.⁵⁰ He questioned some local norms. Jesus spoke against local traditions that persecuted and oppressed some members of His society at that time.⁵¹ He replaced some traditional ideas with revolutionary ones while other traditions He simply reinterpreted.⁵²

⁴⁸ Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 72 – 74.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 114 – 125, 131.

⁵⁰ Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 29.

⁵¹ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 132 – 144.

⁵² Ibid., 178 – 188.

Christ loves us. Only a being that has never – ending love for others would suffer and die to atone for the sins of others.⁵³ He died on the cross of His own volition because He loves us that much.

The Holy Spirit is God.⁵⁴ The Creator breathes and that is Ruach the Spirit.⁵⁵ “Ruach” is a Hebrew word that is in the feminine gender.⁵⁶ The word translates as “She”.⁵⁷ The Ancient Eastern pneumatics believed that the Holy Spirit plays a major role in the Creator’s plan for the salvation of humankind.⁵⁸ Despite the fall of man, Eastern fathers believed that humankind’s goal is to be restored to the divine image of the Triune God.⁵⁹ The fathers believed that this goal is attainable right here on earth.

A positive anthropological stance was the basis of ancient Eastern Christian pneumatology. Because it was and is believed that humankind was made in the image of God, ancient Christian’s believed that it is possible for man to be restored to our original perfection that is represented in the Triune God. It was believed that our restoration to

⁵³ Jacques Dupuis, S. J. *Who Do You Say I Am: Introduction to Christology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 77.

⁵⁴ Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal – Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religion* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 121.

⁵⁵ Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1983), 3-7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, viii.

⁵⁷ Stanley M. Burgess, *Eastern Christian Traditions: The Holy Spirit* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 6.

⁵⁸ Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1983), 7- 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 17 - 22.

the image of God lies in the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰

The Holy Spirit is power.⁶¹ She strengthens us in our resolve to be holy. The Holy Spirit gives us power to discern. She gives us insight into the Scriptures. The Spirit enables us with spiritual gifts.⁶² Paul felt that wisdom, knowledge, and the ability to love are the most important spiritual gifts that the Spirit can bestow on us. The Spirit is God's gift to the Church.⁶³ Jesus informs us that we are to receive the Holy Spirit.

“but you will receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you,...”
(Acts 1 : 8)

Jesus as the Messiah received the Spirit of God.⁶⁴ Then, Jesus gave that Spirit back to humankind as a gift to be a help to us. She abides in us in order to lead and guide us.

Human nature is basically good. When humankind fell in the Garden of Eden the image of divinity that was in humans was clouded. Sin is not human being's natural state. Humans have free will. Individuals can use this free will to continually endeavor to attain divinity that is lost by sin. The Holy Spirit is humans' most formidable weapon in this endeavor.

“But when that One comes (Ruach), The Spirit of truth, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears,

⁶⁰ Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1983), 90.

⁶¹ Stanley M. Burgess, *Eastern Christians Traditions: The Holy Spirit* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 2-5.

⁶² Stanley M. Burgess, *Eastern Christians Traditions: The Holy Spirit* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 139 - 140.

⁶³ Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1983), 94 – 97.

⁶⁴ Amos Yong. *Discerning the Spirit(s)*(Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 120 – 121.

He will speak; and He will announce the coming things to you.” (John 16 : 13).

There are several theories as to why God made humankind. Human beings are made in the image of God. Therefore, man is divine and basically good. Man desires to love and to be loved. It is for this very reason that the idea of the total depravity of the human race is called into question. Somewhere in the depths of humans is the spark of divinity that makes them gods.

“I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High.”
(Psalm 82 : 6 King James Version).

God breathe life into humans. This breath was not merely oxygen. It was the Spirit of God that was blown into humankind. When the breath of God was blown into the lifeless body of humans, the character of God was breathe into humans.

“And Yahweh Elohim formed man (the adam) from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man (the adam) became a living being.” (Genesis 2 : 7).

Like the Godhead, humans are spiritual beings.

“Then Elohim said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,...”
(Genesis 1 : 26).

Humans are capable of demonstrating the moral image of God which proves that humans were originally made righteous and holy. Human beings are divine creatures because they were made just like God.

“So Elohim created man in his own image, in the image of Elohim he created him ; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1 : 27).

We all have our earthly origin from one place, the continent of Africa.⁶⁵ The first human was an African/Edenic Homo Sapien. There are now studies that confirm the single parent theory of “Mitochondrial Eve” or a “common ancestor” that may have lived as recent as 100,000 to 200,000 years ago.⁶⁶ This proves that all mankind is related. We are one family.

The Garden of Eden according to Genesis 2 : 8 – 14, is located in Africa. This Scripture tells us the exact physical location of the Garden by giving us the names of the four ancient rivers that encompassed this special region (Genesis 2 : 11 – 14). The ancient name for the Blue Nile was the Pishon River. The White Nile was known as the Gihon River. The Tigris River was known as the Hiddekel River and the last river mentioned in this text is the Euphrates River.

The Nile River is the longest river in the world, flowing 4,160 miles. It is the only river in the world that rises near the equator and flows into the middle latitudes. It irrigates millions of acres of land in Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Uganda. The Tigris River flows from southwest Turkey through Iraq. There it joins the Euphrates, which rises in the mountains of Turkey, and continues to flow to the Persian Gulf, where it runs southeast through the great plains of Syria in Iraq.

“You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz, and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire,

⁶⁵ Luigi Luca Cacalli – Sforza and Francesco Cavalli – Sforza, *The Great Human Diasporas: The History of Diversity and Evolution* (New York: Addison – Wesley Publishing Company, 1995), 68.

⁶⁶ Chris Stringer and Peter Andrews. *The Complete World of Human Evolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011, 178 – 179.

turquoise, and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared.” (Ezekiel 28 : 13).

Africa is known to be a land that was blessed with an abundance of precious stones.

Most of our contemporary maps show Africa with the Suez Canal being its northeastern border. The man – made Suez Canal was built between 1859 and 1869. Prior to its being built, Africa extended to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This region was landlocked within the main continent of Africa. Genesis 46 : 1-7, and 28, attest to the fact that at one time caravans traveled in these regions by foot.

Before the “Fall” of humankind in the Garden of Eden, humans were sinless and perfect copies of the Godhead. I am not saying that humans were the Almighty, but they were made like everything else Elohim made – after its own kind. When the couple that Christians know as Adam and Eve chose to sin, humans lost what had been given to them at the time of creation. This one rebellious act has caused sin, death, and suffering to become a reality in the life of humans. However, original sin has not caused the total loss of the image of God in man.^{67 68} Unlike the sins that people commit daily, original sin is an inherited sin.⁶⁹ Only one person, Adam, committed this sin. Eve was not responsible for the Fall in the Garden because God did not give the law concerning the trees and the fruit in the Garden to Eve. It was Adam who was

⁶⁷ Matthew Myer Boulton, *Life In God: John Calvin, Practical Formation, and the Future of Protestant Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 205.

⁶⁸ Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), 81.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 83 – 84.

responsible for carrying out the law (Genesis 2 : 15 – 17). Therefore, the descendants of Adam do not hold a personal responsibility for the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

Because of this fact, the descendants of Adam did not all together lose the image of God in them. The image of the Creator is only tainted and covered. It is up to every individual to seek holiness and the divinity that is naturally in them. It is the job of the Holy Spirit to assist humans in the conversion of their hearts. The Spirit makes it possible for man to achieve sanctification. Because humans have free will they have the right to choose if they want to be saved. Therefore, human beings must participate in their own salvation.

At first these African/Edenic people had a very close relationship with God. However, the Triune God did not make puppets when They created humankind. Homo sapiens were given free will to make choices as they saw fit. Using this power, human beings sinned in the Garden of Eden and continues to sin throughout time.

Men and women began to continually corrupt themselves and God sent the punishment of the flood that annihilated all men from the face of the earth except Noah and his family. After the earth had been cleansed, God sent Noah, his wife, and their three sons and their wives to replenish the earth. Since Noah and his family were African/Edenic descendants of Adam, the earth therefore was, once again, populated with African/Edenic people.

One of Noah's sons was named Ham. Originally, all Hamites and Shemities were of African descent. Ham had several children, one of which was Cush. Cush is the biblical name for the land that the Greeks renamed Ethiopia. The word "Ethiopians"

means “burnt faces”. The works of Homer and Herodotus attest to the fact that all the people of the Sudan, Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, Western Asia, India and Ethiopia were considered Ethiopians. The Scriptures refer to all of Africa as Ethiopia.

Abraham, who was the patriarch of the children of Israel, was commanded by God to leave Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 10 : 6), and journey to the land of Canaan which is in Israel, the land that God promised him. The Chaldeans were an African people that descended from Ham. Abraham was known to be “the father of many nations”. His children would later form several world religions. Among these religions would be the three great religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Shechem was a son of Hamos the Hivite, who was a descendent of Canaan. Canaan was the name of one of Ham’s sons. Shechem was a city in ancient Canaan, which is now modern Israel, and specifically in the modern city of Nablus.

When Joseph’s brothers journeyed to Egypt, they did not recognize Joseph (Genesis 42:8). Had Joseph been a white man with European features he would have been easy to pick out among the Egyptians. But Joseph and his family and the rest of the Hebrew people at that time had the same physical features as the Egyptians. It is a fact that Egyptians are African people. Moses and Jesus were African/Edenic men. If they were not, then they would have stood out during the times they both lived in Egypt. We are all one family.

The Triune God is faithful and possesses a never – ending love for all humankind including the African/Edenic people that are the children of Israel. These were a holy people to God whom He/She chose to be His/Her special people. God swore an oath to

their fathers, that as long as the African/Edenic Israelites kept God's commandments and statutes, He will keep covenant with them forever. But humans continued to sin. A merciful God has forgiven man uncountable times. In addition to forgiving humans, God has made provisions for humans to be able to return to their original state of divinity. To this end, God in Their vast mercy, has instituted several dispensational periods and has made several covenants with humankind.

A dispensation is a probationary period of time in which humans are tested in relationship to the revealed word of the Godhead. The word "dispensation" is a Greek word - "oikonomia" that means "house law". It denotes how the house is managed, the "economy", and how the house keeps its affairs in order.

A dispensational period is a recognizable historic division of time in Scripture where God observes the behavior of humans. Then God passes judgment on what They observed. With each dispensational period man sinned and fell short of the image of God humans should possess. With each failure God, in Their great mercy, instituted a new dispensational period. God's purpose during a dispensational period is the complete salvation of humankind.

Because God is holy and possesses steadfast love for us, They also made several covenants with humans. "Berith" is the Old Testament Hebrew word for covenant. In the New Testament Greek the word is "diatheke". A covenant is a promise or an agreement between God and man or man and his/her fellow man. A covenant could be conditional or unconditional.

Covenants, unlike dispensations, continue forever because they involve the Triune

God's pledged word. This is an important fact. The Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant. In the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses gives the children of Israel the greatest of all laws and commandments that had ever been handed down from God.

“Hear, O Israel : The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength.”
(Deuteronomy 6 : 4 – 5).

The empowerment to prosper was contingent on the people keeping their contractual agreement with God.

“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.” (Deuteronomy 8 : 18).

It is only through the sacrifices of Christ on the cross that humans are able to retrieve the image of divinity that had been lost to them by their sins. It was prophesied in Jeremiah 31. This covenant is an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant. This new covenant is also spoken of in the New Testament.

“For this (is) the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. (Hebrews 8 : 10).

Our God is a loving Father/Mother who is willing to forgive us our iniquities. The Mosaic Covenant appointed weak and imperfect priest as executors of the covenant. Because it was affected by human limitations a better covenant was needed. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ made believers whole. In Romans 8 : 3, Paul speaks of the weakness of the “flesh” of the covenant of the law. He indirectly refers to the “new covenant” that came about ushered in by the death of Christ. Christ was the mediator of a better covenant. In this covenant we received the promise of an eternal inheritance. This

promise is made to all human beings because we are all the descendent of African/Hebrews and Christ died to make **all** men free.

“From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshippers, my scattered people, will bring me offerings. On that day you will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me,...” (Zephaniah 3 : 10 to 11a).

As Genesis 2 verses 11 – 14 tells us, the rivers that encompass the Garden of Eden, are in Cush, otherwise known as Ethiopia. However, I do not believe that the promises of God are only for black people. Let us recall that all people evolved from Africans. Therefore, by extension all people are of the African Diaspora. And the promises of Yahweh belong to anyone who wishes them.

“At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your eyes says the Lord.” (Zephaniah 3 : 20).

God gave humans a mission to be completed on the earth. Humans were to dominate the earth. Humans were to manage the earth’s resources. Humans were to be fruitful. Humans were to reproduce their own kind. Humans were made to rule over all that God gave them on the earth but not to rule over other humans. God created man to extend Their heavenly kingdom to earth.

The Triune God created us from one source so that we are all one. The Godhead has commanded us to respect the rights of others and to have an affinity for each other. The Creator, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit direct their actions toward humankind in an effort to have all human beings saved from an existence of being separated from God forever. The Church has been established to contribute in this endeavor. From the

beginning of Christianity, the church has depended on the work of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰

The church is made up of people who believe in God. In the body of Christ the church conducts its main function which is to love (Revelation 2 : 4) and worship the Triune God. Humans gain knowledge of God through the reading and studying of the Bible (Colossians 4 : 16). Church leaders worship God when we preach the Word (2 Timothy 4 : 2). The Church is a witness to the Word of God. We worship God when we teach the Word and when we pray (Acts 2 : 42). We worship the Triune God when we obey Their ordinances (1 Corinthians 4 : 2). We worship God through the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5: 19). We worship God through the sacrifices we make with our bodies (Romans 12 : 1).

The church is to glorify God (Ephesians 1 : 5 – 6). Through our actions, we the body of Christ, are a witness to the world of God's grace (Ephesians 2 : 7). The church has the task of evangelizing the world (Matthew 28 : 19 – 20). The church is to baptize and instruct believers (Matthew 28 : 19 – 20). The church is to edify believers (1 Corinthians 14 : 16). The church is to act as a light leading the people in the right way (Matthew 5 : 13 – 16). The church illuminates the mysteries of the Scriptures and the sacraments. The sacraments are the ritualization of ceremonial activity in the church. The church is to provide fellowship to the believers (Acts 2 : 42; 1 Corinthians 1 : 9). The church is to care for the people in time of need (2 Corinthians 8 to 9).

“The experience that a transformation of all human life is given in the fact that ‘Jesus is there only for others.’....our relation to God is a new life in ‘existence for others,’ through participation in the being of Jesus.

⁷⁰ Johannes C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966), 37 - 38.

....The Church is the Church only when it exists for others.It must tell men of every calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others.”⁷¹

God, in the person of Jesus Christ, came to earth for our sake. Just so the church, as a witness to God, must not exist to be an institution for its own good, but as an institution of servitude for the people of the world.

“Thus the church must prove her legitimacy, her ‘realness,’ by being there for the other. She does not exist in herself and certainly not for herself either; just as the Messiah did not exist in and for himself.”⁷²

In order to accomplish the tasks that God has given the Church it is necessary that the Church educate the people.

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
(John 8 : 32 KJV).

Our only hope in this world is contingent on having a good working knowledge of God. Freedom can only be found in a holy relationship with our creator. It is important that all people become well versed in their sacred texts.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” (Hosea 4: 6 KJV).

I find that many American Christian churches that do offer Bible study offer curriculum that are immature, and does not challenge the participant to think for themselves. The study of Scripture should be presented as a lifelong pilgrimage to uncovering God’s truth.

⁷¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Letters and Papers From Prison* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971), 202 – 204.

⁷² Johannes C. Hoekendijk. *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966), 72.

We must in the first place find ourselves fully at home in this strange new world of the Bible so that we can move familiarly about and concretize and articulate the shalom in a different way in different situations....The koinonia is the place where the shalom is already lived. As such, the Christian community belongs to the new age. That means that this fellowship of the partakers of the same salvation is nothing more in this world than a company of strangers and pilgrims (1Peter 2 : 11), a paroikia, or a group of sojourners in the world, fully detached and therefore free to relate itself to every form of existence.⁷³

It is the responsibility of the church to give their congregants the skills necessary to become thinkers and to engage in deliberative theology. However, churches that educate their congregations to exegete biblical texts are not the norm in our society. The church must guide their congregants in examining this acceptance of the status quo and ridding themselves of these traditions.⁷⁴

Jesus set the mandate for His disciples and was a model for the church. It is the responsibility of the church to feed the sheep in our care the Word of God. The Word is liberating. In the Word there is life. I believe that education is very important. I believe that God is concerned that Their people seek wisdom and knowledge. The Scriptures bear this out in Hosea 4 and in many other passages of the Bible.

“When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.”
(Proverbs 2: 10 – 11)

“Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve you: love her, and she shall keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all your getting get understanding.” (Proverb 4: 5 – 7).

⁷³ Johannes C. Hoekendijk. *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966), 28 – 29.

⁷⁴ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr. *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 248 – 255.

I believe that one of the most important assignments that God has given the church is the education of Their people. Without knowledge we are all lost. We must know and understand our roles as Christians. Knowledge is important not only for our salvation, but it is also important for our lives right here on earth.

When we hear and obey the Word of God we become one with God. Poverty, family dysfunctions, and the moral decay of our society are a few of the problems we face every day in our world. But these problems are not the main problem that we face. Ignorance is our basic problem. We do not know who we are in the Triune God. We are not aware of the righteousness granted to us by God's grace and love. Without this vital information people are pawns to be tossed to and fro. Oppression is fed by misinformation and ignorance. It is the duty of the church to keep faith with the Creator by believing in and teaching His/Her Word.

Discipleship from a biblical standpoint is about following Jesus. The word "akolouthein" is a Greek term used in the Bible. This term means "to go after or behind someone" or "to follow". This is accomplished by acting the way Jesus would act and doing the things that Jesus would do.

Discipleship has the power to free man from earthly dogmas. Discipleship is not the adoption of a program, ideal or law. The only real meaning of discipleship is the fulfillment of the command "Follow Me".⁷⁵ This command is given personally to individuals and each individual must follow the one that gave the command - Jesus Christ.

⁷⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, MacMillan Publishing Co., 1978), 48 – 49.

Discipleship is obedience. It is complete surrender of one's life to God.

Discipleship goes beyond praising Jesus; it is practicing living a loving life like Jesus did.

“Discipleship does not afford us a point of vantage from which to attack others; we come to them with an unconditional offer of fellowship, with the single – mindedness of the love of Jesus”⁷⁶

Jesus did not conform to the socially oppressive government or religious hierarchy of His day.

“It is becoming clearer every day that the most urgent problem besetting our church is this: How can we live the Christian life in the modern world.”⁷⁷

With the yoke of Christ comes the grace that will allow a disciple to persevere under the pressure. Discipleship takes work but brings a great reward. Discipleship brings joy.⁷⁸

Obedience is even more important for a disciple of Christ that has been called to minister to His people. As ministers we have specific responsibilities to the people God has called us to serve. The church is not a place for the servant of God to fulfill their desires but the church is a place to meet the needs of the people.

“The church lives for the world. She can only ‘share in the gospel’ if she desires to serve all (1 Cor. 9 : 19 – 23).”⁷⁹

History is a witness to religious elites that have used the church and the Word of God to exploit others.

⁷⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (new York: Macmillan Publishing Co, 1978), 204.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 60.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 101.

⁷⁹ Johannes C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966), 43.

Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 23 : 1,2,4 KJV).

As ministers in the service of Christ, we are not to dominate over our flock, but we are to serve our flock. Jesus said that he came to serve rather than to be served (Mark 10 : 45). The best example a minister can follow is the common sense, pastoral example of Jesus Christ. Jesus was in touch with His own feelings and therefore, He was able to sympathize with others and what they were experiencing.⁸⁰ A minister must meet the needs of the people in whatever state or situation they find them in. A minister must take the time to find out what needs are lacking in their congregation and beyond.

Jesus taught in synagogues, in temples and in private homes. But He also taught on mountains, in fields, and on roads. Jesus taught the high and mighty as well as the lowly. A minister must endeavor to communicate with the people where they are and on the level that is most comfortable for his or her audience.

Peace is not an impossible dream. The attaining of peace is not something that man cannot achieve. If peace was not possible Jesus Christ would not have commanded us to love one another.⁸¹ In addition Jesus states in John 14 : 27 “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you...” (King James Version). Leaders of all religious traditions

⁸⁰ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr. *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 43.

⁸¹ Ibid., 93.

have a responsibility to contribute toward the process of peace. This must begin with respecting the tenets, cultures, and practices of faith traditions other than their own. Once religious hierarchy demonstrates love of their fellow man, they can lead the way for their adherents to follow.

“...pluralism is a prerequisite for authentic Christian living, ...Christianity has affirmed with the Gentile breakthrough the shibboleth of God’s faithfulness toward all peoples.”⁸²

Religious practices can promote peace by introducing their members to various faith traditions and by involving themselves in various practical initiatives that work toward the betterment of mankind.

⁸² Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 233.

Chapter 3

Thoughts on Sacred Texts and Names for the Attributes of the Divine

“Meeting individuals of another faith, reading their sacred texts, won’t always yield constructive results. Still, one can’t avoid the question: Is that a reason not to do it?”⁸³

Gustav Niebuhr

Most human beings feel the need for guidance and inspiration. The reading of Sacred Scripture brings humans to truth, beauty, and stability in an every transient world. The reading of Sacred Text enriches our vision of the world.

A literal reading of Sacred Text will not afford us the true meaning of the text. We find new meaning each time we reread the text. Many times what is being literally stated is a great deal less than what the author wants the reader to come away with. There are meanings in the mere sounds of the words of the Sacred Texts of some faith traditions. There are also meanings in the name that the author has chosen to use to describe the Divine.

Because no one knew what vowels belonged in “Yhwh” Jewish scholars took the vowels from the name “Adonai” which means “Lord” and inserted them into “Yhwh”

⁸³ Gustav Niebuhr, *Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), xxxiv.

This action produced the name "YaHoVaH". We pronounce this word "Jehovah". This action produced a combination of the Hebrew words for "God" and for "Lord".

Therefore, "Jehovah" can be translated as "Lord God".

The name "Elohim" reflects divine majesty and power. Biblical scholars tell us that this word is actually a plural word for "majesty" reflecting the fact that God is three persons in one. The word "elohim" which means "a god", referred to the things most revered by ancient man. "Elohim" can be translated as "something or someone that is worshipped".

God is known by the name "El - Elyon" which means "Most High God". "El" is the singular form of "Elohim".

"But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth,...."
(Genesis 14 : 22).

"El - Elyon" literally means "supreme God" or "most loved God".

When speaking to Abram, God refers to Themselves as "El - Shaddai".

"When Abram was ninety - nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty, walk before me and be blameless'."
(Genesis 17 : 1).

"El - Shaddai" is Hebrew for "God Almighty." This name gives us confidence that God can handle any problems that come our way. God is our protector. The Triune God protects us from not only physical harm but also from demonic attacks.

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for Yahweh your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you."
(Deuteronomy 31 : 6).

When the situation is difficult and we need faith to carry on, we know that

“Jehovah – Jireh” is the name of God that means “the Lord will provide”. God sees what lies ahead and has preplanned the provision for us.

Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”
“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said,
“but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham answered, “God
himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.”
And the two of them went on together.”
(Genesis 22 : 7 – 8).

Abraham saw his provision – the ram caught by its horns in the thicket - before it was manifested. Faith is seeing and speaking God’s promises even before we can see them.

God wants us to be healthy physically, spiritually, and mentally. The people of God are not to simply surrender to illness, disease or mental disorders. We can call on “Jehovah – Repheka”.

“...I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians,
for I am the Lord who heals you.”
(Exodus 15 : 26b).

God made our bodies, and if it fits Their purposes, God will heal our bodies and keep us healthy.

God is merciful. They stand at the ready to forgive us our trespasses. As born again believers we have been given the gift of salvation and righteousness. We cannot earn righteousness. “Jehovah – Tsidquenu” bestows righteousness on us.

“In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.”
(Jeremiah 23 : 6).

“Jehovah – Tsidquenu” means that we are in the place of right standing with God.

God is the Commander – in – chief of the heavenly armies. The Triune God leads the heavenly hosts in battle against the enemy. We do not war against people but against

Satan (Ephesians 6 : 12). Satan (and the forces of evil) is the enemy. We lose battles when we are fooled into fighting people instead of the demonic spirits that may be controlling them. We must learn to recognize the true enemy.

God as “Jehovah - Sabaoth” hears us and helps us in times when we must go to battle. The term “Lord of Hosts” is cited 282 times in the Bible. This is a military term that means “God of Battles”.

“Like birds hovering overhead, Yahweh of Hosts will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will pass over it and will rescue it.”
(Isaiah 31 :5).

“Sabaoth” is a Hebrew word that can also be translated “tsaba”. This word has two definitions. As a verb it means “waging war”. As a noun it means “armies, hosts, and multitudes”.

“Jehovah - Nissi” can be translated as “the Lord is my banner” or “the Lord is my sign of conquest”.

“Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner. He said, “For hands were lifted up to the throne of the Lord. The Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.”
(Exodus 17 : 15 – 16).

“Jehovah – Nissi” is our banner of victory over the enemy. The Bible serves to remind us that the war against the enemy has already been won.

God enjoys living among and in Thier people. “Jehovah – Shamah” tells us that God spends time with human beings.

“The distance all around will be 18,000 cubits. And the name of the city from that time on will be: The Lord Is There.”
(Ezekiel 48 : 35).

God is here with us on earth and we are invited to spend eternity with God in heaven.

As already stated God wishes us to live in peace. God is peace itself.

“So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called “The Lord is Peace”.
To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.”
(Judges 6 : 24).

God has given us many names by which to know Them. I have only mentioned but a few of the names of God. Understanding the names of God helps us to experience a deeper relationship with Them. The names of God are holy and a blessing. But we must be careful how we use God’s name. It is a sin to curse using the name of God. This is one of the Ten Commandments.

“You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God, for Yahweh will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”
(Exodus 20 : 7).

I believe that there is only one God. The God that I worship and the God that others worship may be called by different names but is the same God that is in all human beings and is recognized by most human beings. The names of the Creator are beautiful indeed. Humankind always had very special names for the Most Holy of Holies. Every tribe, nation, or group of people has names for the different characteristics of the Creator. Every human community has designated the Supreme Being with names by which They are known to the community.

Many cultures have words for the Creator that has similar histories.

“Etymologically, *Allah* comes from the same root as the biblical words *Elohim*, *ha – Elohim*, and *ha – Eloh* (all meaning “God”) invoked by the Hebrew prophets and the Aramaic and Syriac *Alaha* (“God”) used by John the Baptist and Jesus.”⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Umar F. Abdullah, “One God, Many Names”. Seasons – Semiannual Journal of Zaytuna Institute. Volume 2, Number 1. (Spring – Summer Reflections), 2004.

Instinctive knowledge of a Creator is part of every human being. The names “Creator” and “Maker” are virtually universally used by all people. Primitive religions have many names that bear witness to such characteristics of God as Oneness, Preexistence, Eternity, Goodness and Justice. God is known in pre – historic religions as the source of all things and the possessor of all knowledge and wisdom.

The Nilotic tribes of the southern part of the Sudan shared an ancient belief in a “Great God” who created humankind. They acknowledge God to be eternal, without origin, “All – knowing” and “All – Powerful”. “The Lord of all things” is a name for God used by South African Bushmen and pygmies of Gabon.

Native Americans have many names for God. “Creator of the universe” and “Lord of the entire heaven and earth” are two of the names used by the Cheyenne. The Maidu of California call God “Ruler of the world”. “Our Creator”, “You to whom we pray”, “Pure Spirit”, and “You to whom we belong” are some of the names used by the Lenape.

“The Divine maker of the worlds”, “the Protector” and “the Inspirer” are names used by the Ainu of Japan. “Eternal” is one of the names given to God by the Wiridyuri of Australia. There are several Aboriginal tribes that have named God “the Great Builder” and “the Great Maker”.

The Egyptians had many names for the attributes of God. The Chinese named God⁸⁵ “Creator”, “the Ruler of heaven” and “Shangti”⁸⁶ for “Most High”. Names for

⁸⁵ Sangkeun Kim, *Strange Names of God: The Missionary Translation of the Divine Name and the Chinese Responses to Matteo Ricci's Shangti in Late Ming China, 1583 – 1644* (New York: Peter Lang

God used by the Sanskrit Vedas of ancient India included “the Manifest One” and simply “Who” (Ka), meaning the One who is ultimately beyond description.

God translated Themselves into humanity through the incarnation of the person of Yeshua the Christ. This salvic act of translation has legitimized the translation of Christianity into other vernaculars.⁸⁷ Cultural pluralism was a factor of Christianity at the time of Pentecost (Acts 2: 7 – 12). In speaking about primitive Christians, Lamin Sanneh states:

...from their understanding of the life and work of Jesus Christ, they came to a fresh view about God’s impartial action in all cultures. The “many tongues” of Pentecost affirmed God’s acceptance of all cultures within the scheme of salvation, reinforcing the position that Jews and Gentiles were equal before God.⁸⁸

Going all the way back to the early Christian missions in Antioch, Gentiles have found legitimacy in Christianity through their own mother tongue.⁸⁹ The early Christians understood that in order to carry Christianity to all parts of the world, as Christ has directed us to do in the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19 – 20), “...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” it would be necessary to translate the message into the language of the people.

Publishing, 2004), 128 – 131, 183 – 211.

⁸⁶ Sangkeun Kim, *Strange Names of God: The Missionary Translation of the Divine Name and the Chinese Responses to Matteo Ricci’s Shangti in Late Ming China, 1583 - 1644* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), 1-3.

⁸⁷ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 16 – 27.

⁸⁸ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 46.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

Translating the Scriptures into the language of indigenous people makes the Bible more familiar to them. This resulted in the Scriptures coming alive for the people and the God of the Christian Bible more accessible.⁹⁰

“There is a radical pluralism implied in vernacular translation wherein all languages and cultures are, in principle, equal in expressing the word of God.”⁹¹

By viewing all cultures and the languages of diverse cultures as good in God’s eyes, Christian missionaries found that it was not difficult to translate Christianity in many cultures and tongues.

“...God, who has no linguistic favorites, has determined that we should hear the Good News ‘in our own native tongue’.”⁹²

It is the relatively easy translation ability of Christian beliefs into the tongues of many different cultures that has caused it to be accepted by many cultures. This is especially true when it came to descriptions of God and words used to describe God.⁹³ Using indigenous words to translate the attributes of God only results in enriching the understanding of the Divine.

...in the successful assimilation of Christianity in Africa and elsewhere, God as an exclusive, jealous being was made to yield to considerations of inclusiveness in both the social and the religious dimensions. The reason is obvious. When *ndina* or other indigenous equivalent is adapted as the God of the Scriptures, then

⁹⁰ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 208.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid, 174.

⁹³ Sangkeun Kim, *Strange Names of God: The Missionary Translation of the Divine Name and the Chinese Responses to Matteo Ricci’s Shangti in Late Ming China, 1583 – 1644* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), 5.

those worshipping in God's name have necessarily brought within range all the familiar associations of the term. As such, when new converts prayed to the God of Jesus Christ as *ndina*, for example, they created an overlap to preserve and perpetuate the earlier notions in the environment of the new dispensation.⁹⁴

In addition, the use of the cultural vernacular allowed people of indigenous cultures to translate their understanding of God, to the God of the Christian Hebrew and Greek Bible. This action does not represent substituting the old for the new beliefs, but a transformation, thereby deepening, broadening and enriching what was already believed.⁹⁵

“When missionaries preached the Christian God, people recognized attributes of *Olorun or Ngewo* in the missionary preaching of the Christian God. Africans thus responded to Christian preaching by recognizing God in their ‘pre – Christian’ past and in their vernacular languages.”⁹⁶

Indigenous people recognized the attributes of the God that they knew and loved in the God of the missionaries.⁹⁷

“...for most converts, the Bible that they came to know was the vernacular Scripture, so that in the new vessel of a written sacred text converts heard God addressing them in the old, familiar idiom.”⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 177.

⁹⁵ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 28.

⁹⁶ Sangkeun Kim, *Strange Names of God: The Missionary Translation of the Divine Name and the Chinese Responses to Matteo Ricci's Shangti in Late Ming China, 1583 – 1644* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004).5.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 184.

Christians do not have a monopoly on God.

In studies of intercessory prayer, researchers have found no correlation between the religious affiliation of the praying individual and the effects of the prayer. This affirms the view that prayer is universal, that it belongs not just to a specific religion but to the entire human race. These findings sanction the importance of religious tolerance, asking us to honor the prayers and spiritual visions of other religious traditions, no matter how radically they differ from our own.⁹⁹

As children of the Most High we must all learn to appreciate and respect one another and our different religious beliefs.¹⁰⁰ It is wrong to criticize the religious beliefs of other cultures. The apostle Paul understood the pluralism of Gentiles as a justification for tolerance of cultures and as part of the mission of Christianity.¹⁰¹

“...for in his (Paul’s) view God’s purposes are mediated through particular cultural streams.”¹⁰²

It is wrong to speak negatively about the prophets of other religions. We worship a God that loves variety. Flowers, animals, birds, and people – God has made all things different and unique. God even made each snow flake unique. Therefore, wouldn’t it make sense that the Triune God would appreciate the beings that were created in Their own image worshipping Them in various ways.

⁹⁹ Anthony Stern, *Everything Starts from Prayer: Mother Teresa’s Meditations on Spiritual Life for People of All Faiths* (Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1998), xi.

¹⁰⁰ Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 37.

¹⁰¹ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 47.

¹⁰² Ibid.

“In the African chapter of Christian encounter with other religious orientations, however, ‘the Christian preachers found God already there, known by a vernacular name’¹⁰³.”¹⁰⁴

God has commanded Their followers to bring others into the truth. How can we do that if we insult others and what they believe?

Missionaries should have been pleased when they came upon evidence that God had preceded them, and that Africans possessed profound faith in the divine providence. More than that, the willingness of Africans to receive the gospel as confirmation of what they always knew should have delighted missionaries and given them heart that Scripture was being confirmed when it spoke of God not being without witness even when all nations walked in their own ways (Acts 14: 16 – 17), or that God shows no favoritism in dealings with people (Act 10:34). Instead, the missionaries appear to have been surprised, even antagonized, by examples of faithfulness, hospitality, and forgiveness, standards by which they were purporting to justify the whole enterprise of mission itself.

Faced with this bewildering situation, Africans began earnestly to inquire into the Christian Scriptures, which missionaries had placed in their hands, to see where they had misunderstood the gospel. What they learned convinced them that mission as European cultural hegemony was a catastrophic departure from the Bible.¹⁰⁵

Lester Sumrall states in his book *The Names of God*...

“But there is another, more subtle kind of “taking God’s name in vain” - a kind many Christians practice. That is the vain habit of pronouncing God’s condemnation against something that God does not condemn.”¹⁰⁶

If we are to follow God’s command we are to love others, even those who do not believe

¹⁰³ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, 71.

¹⁰⁴ Sangkeun Kim, *Strange Names of God: The Missionary Translation of the Divine Name and the Chinese Responses to Matteo Ricci’s Shangti in Late Ming China, 1583 – 1644* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), 5.

¹⁰⁵ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 168 - 169.

¹⁰⁶ Sumrall, Lester, *The Names of God*, (USA: Whitaker House, 1993), 52.

the same things that we do. In his book *Translating the Message*, Lamin Sanneh wrote that Matthew Ajuoga who founded The Church of Christ in Africa (CCA)

“...claimed that *hera*, ‘brotherly love,’ was absent in missionary treatment of African converts, and he concluded that such treatment represented a scandalous failure to love.”¹⁰⁷

It is easier to convince others of the love of God when we, as ambassadors of God, show love. It is easier to convince others of the truths of the Bible when we show love and respect for others and their faiths.

The concept of “peace” is universal. It would be difficult to find a language, culture, or society that did not have a word that meant “peace”. It would be equally as difficult to find a religion that did not teach “peace” in its doctrines. The Arabic word “Islam” refers to the Arabic word for peace which is “salam.” Muslims greet each other with the words “as-salamu alaykum” which is translated “Peace be upon you”. Jews use the word “shalom” which is translated “peace” as a greeting. Catholics greet each other during the celebration of the Mass with “a sign of peace” as does some Protestant denominations during their worship services.

Most religions teach some form of the Golden Rule.

Christian Scriptures

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you,
for this sums up the Law and the Prophets
Matthew 7:12 New International Version

African Traditional Religion

¹⁰⁷ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 168 - 169.

What you give (or do) to others, these will you give (or do) to you in return.
Rwandan Proverb

Buddhism

Hurt not others in ways that you would find hurtful.
Udanavarga 5:18

Confucianism

It is the maxim of loving kindness (Jin):
Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you.
Anacleets (Rongo) 15:23

Hinduism

This is the sum of duty: Do not do to others what would cause you pain if done to you.
Mahabharata 5.15.17

Islam

No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself.
The Forty – Two Traditions of An – Nawawi

Jainism

A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated.
Suktrakritanga 1.11.33

Judaism

What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man.
This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.
Talmud, Shabbat 312

Taoism

Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss.
T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien

Zoroastrianism

Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others.
Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29

One is to take from the past what is good and bring it into the present in order to make positive progress through the use of knowledge and wisdom. The Bible and other Sacred Texts warn about the importance of “remembering”. As humans we have lost our

spiritual ability to experience God due to lack of knowledge.¹⁰⁸ When we forget our past we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes. Through knowledge of these gems, I believe that all men will live better lives and enjoy a closer spiritual connection with their Creator. I believe that these truths can lead to a greater love of self, our fellow man and our Creator. The Word of God – the Bible – is our source. It is the source upon which all Christian beliefs and practices find root. Christians must endeavor to achieve an accurate interpretation and application of the Bible.

In order to know who you are you must also know who you are not. Therefore, it is essential that Christians must also have knowledge of doctrines that are particular to their religious beliefs as well as the religious beliefs of other faith traditions.

“...even to insist that Christian scripture is divinely inspired and normative does not do away with the requirement for careful exegesis and interpretation of both the Christian Bible and non – Christian canonical texts.”¹⁰⁹

It is the responsibility of the church to give their congregants the skills necessary to become thinkers and to engage in deliberative theology.

Why is it so important for the laity of the church to be able to understand the Word of God for themselves? We all know the old proverb:

“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man how to fish and you feed him for life.”

True faith is built on the examination of Biblical truths for the purpose of a clear understanding of those truths. Study of ancient Biblical texts should not be for mere

¹⁰⁸ Tenzin Gyatso His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama, and Howard C. Cutler, *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), 306 – 309.

¹⁰⁹ Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal – Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religion* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 318.

propaganda or ideology but for God's truth to set us free. It is the person that has the capacity to analyze the Scriptures, and the doctrines based on those Scriptures, that will be able to take ownership of their beliefs thereby developing their own insights and knowledge that can bring about wisdom and understanding. We have here a new paradigm of empowerment. True faith should be based on wisdom and knowledge of God. Conversing, discerning and engaging with Sacred Texts is essential for transformation to take place.

So many people know all about the rituals and the traditions in their house of worship, but they do not know God for themselves. They have been robbed of this knowledge because they have not been equipped with the skills needed to study the Word of God in which God's true self is revealed.

The goal of "Bible Walk: A Journey from the Riverside Church to Ancient Israel" was to enable the explorers to study Sacred Scripture in order to find divine truths that have been lost to us. The quest for knowledge took the form of critical examination of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Our initial call to action was to remove the linguistic, historic and cultural veils and mysteries that separate us from the information that the Divine wants to impart to us. Explorers moved beyond cognitive competence of the text to a spiritual experience with the text.

Chapter 4

The Case for Multifaith Education

“We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven,
while we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have
the prophetic message more fully confirmed. ...”
(2 Peter 1 : 18 – 19a The New Oxford Annotated Bible)

As Christian educators our ultimate purpose is to aid others in their quest to be in the presence of God. Christian education is the application of the mind to the studying and understanding of paths to reach that goal. The Bible tells us that even though we live in the world, we should not live like the rest of the world but like people who know the Triune God. But since we are in the world we need to know how to live in this world while we are here. A prophetic Christian Education program will help individuals develop tools that will enable them to live well in this world as well as help them to prepare for the world to come.

Our understanding of prophetic comes out of the conventional tradition of the Bible. Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jesus the Christ¹¹⁰, just to name a few, were all prophetic ministers. Each of these men had very specific tasks to accomplish. Each

¹¹⁰ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York; Doubleday, 2006), 145 – 158.

of these men spoke of a vision that was for their time. It does not matter if the prophet is speaking to people who are in exile and suffering under oppression, or to people who are living in abundance and blind contentment, it is the role of the prophet to speak the true word of God.

The prophet's job is to inform the people in order for transformation to take place in the people. This is also the mandate of a prophetic Christian education program.¹¹¹ It is for the "prophetic Christian educator"¹¹² to equip the people with the vision and the true word of God. It is the task of the prophet to point out that there is a discrepancy between the living conditions of the people and the vision of God. It is the task of the prophetic Christian educator to evoke and nurture a conscienceness that is an alternative to the dominant culture we live in.¹¹³

Since September 11, 2001 there has been much said about certain faith traditions that have been false and demonizing in nature. Most Americans do not take the time or do not have an opportunity to explore faith traditions other than their own. They acquire most of their information about other religious traditions from unreliable sources such as newspapers and television programs.¹¹⁴ There are times when these forms of communication disseminate negative thoughts that feed religious conflict. As Christian

¹¹¹ Kieran Scott, "Continuity and Change in Religious Education: Building on the Past, Re – Imagining the Future" in Oliver Brennan, ed. *Critical Issues in Religious Education*, (USA: Veritas Press, 2005), 87 – 89.

¹¹² Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 67 – 68.

¹¹³ Ibid., 132.

¹¹⁴ Juli Cragg Hilliard, "The Quest for Understanding: Exploring Religions Common Threads", Publisher's Weekly. Religious Update (March 24, 2003), 63.

educators, it is important to correct the misconceptions concerning faith communities that some newspapers, television programs, publications, the internet, and the radio perpetuate. Misunderstandings concerning religious communities and highly volatile religious situations that we read about in our newspapers every day place the responsibility on Christian leaders to offer quality instruction to their congregants concerning other faith traditions.

Why is multifaith education important?

The word “interfaith” is used to mean between faith communities such as an interfaith dialogue or an interfaith worship service. The word “multifaith” is used to mean many faiths such as the fact that we live in a diverse society of multifaiths.

In our society there are several people that we come in contact with every day that practice religious traditions that we have no knowledge of and that we may be harboring some negative misconceptions about. We live in a highly religious diverse society. In many churches there are congregants that are spouses of members of faith traditions other than Christian. As Christian educators it is our responsibility to work toward reducing the number of our church members that are suffering with bias and misunderstanding of non – Christian religions. We must give our church members a working knowledge of other cultures and religious communities. In addition, engaging in multifaith study enriches our knowledge of our own faith tradition.

A prophetic Christian education course of study¹¹⁵ would include the acquiring of knowledge. It is important that Christians know about the doctrines that are involved in

¹¹⁵ Jane E. Regan, “Renewing the Prophetic Voice: Insights from Adult Education Theory,” Proceedings – APRRE Annual Meeting. 1997.

their faith. In order to cultivate a prophetic voice in a Christian education program, the teachings must be based on the Bible. A good religious course must be concerned with informing Christians on what they need to know in order to be good Christians. It is from the Scriptures that we learn what it means to be Christians. Education in theological skills and disciplines is necessary in order for Christians to understand and follow moral principles, policies, and praxis. The dispensing of information helps the student gain the skills and knowledge needed to be active participants in the Christian community.

Christian multifaith education will not be without its challenges. There will be those that will have religious reasons for not wanting to engage in multifaith study. There will be members of faith communities that do not believe that Jesus Christ is God. This can be a stumbling block for many on both sides of the isle. There is also the belief that other faith traditions worship different gods. However, if explorers understand that it is not necessary for them or others to adopt theology that they do not believe these stumbling blocks can be eliminated. Examining and respecting beliefs that other faith traditions have, does not require one to accept a belief as their own.¹¹⁶

There will be those that will insist that their religion is the one and only right tradition and believe that this fact makes it unnecessary for them to engage in multifaith education. Some may even use multifaith education to try to proselytize members of other faith traditions. Respect for others and what they believe will allow for accepting differences in our beliefs.

¹¹⁶ Kieran Scott, "Is Adult Education Unique?" in *The Living Light: An Interdisciplinary Review of Catholic Religious Education, Catechesis, and Youth Pastoral Ministry*, Washington, D. C.: Department of Education United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, (Fall, 2002), 81.

There will be political and historical reasons that will prevent some from engaging in multifaith study. Our country has been involved in a war for many years. This has caused many scars for our citizens.

Then there will be those that do not believe that the study of other religious traditions is worth their taking time to do. They may believe themselves to be too busy. There are those that simply do not care about other religions and may be a bit ambivalent about their own faith tradition.

There are institutional practices, procedures and policies that hinder adult Christian learning that should be reduced or eliminated. Classes should be scheduled so that they can be made available at convenient times for as many people as possible. Publicizing of classes should be extensive so that people can be informed. Christian education classes should be relevant to the participants. They should address topics that are of concern today. In an adult Christian education program, any topic should be able to be discussed without censorship or indoctrination.

The biggest problem I believe is fear.¹¹⁷ There will be those parishioners that believe that they are too old to learn new things and those that believe that they do not have the capacity to learn in a structured setting. Some may fear that having knowledge of other faith traditions will lead to their being converted to another faith and the loss of their own faith identity. Some may fear that members of their faith community may fall in love with and marry members of other faith communities. Still others may fear that

¹¹⁷ Peter J. Paris et al. *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 51.

there may be violent conflicts with members of other faiths.

“The hope is that as we seek and search and think together, we might overcome the fear that keeps us from a radical change.”¹¹⁸

Despite these challenges, multifaith education should and must take place.¹¹⁹ The church must act as a vehicle to understanding and accepting different cultures. The church must educate their congregants not only on things that pertain to their souls but also things that would make their lives on this earth more livable. This will result in the lifelong transformation of people for the sake of the transformation of the world. Education for an adult centered Christian program should be an education towards discerning hearts and critically perceptive minds. Adult learning is a process of new meaning making that contributes to transforming the way individuals know the world.¹²⁰

What components should be contained in a prophetic Christian educational program?

When a Christian educator poses real life situation problems, and allows the adult explorer to attempt to find solutions to the problems, the educator is using “inquiry learning”. A good instructor will pose case studies, moral dilemmas, current event issues, and questions that will engage the adult in critical discourse.¹²¹ Inquiry method of learning follows the evidence to wherever it takes one. When a Christian’s response to a

¹¹⁸ Johannes C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966), 70.

¹¹⁹ Alice Mann, *Can Our Church Live: Redeveloping Congregations in Decline* (United States: Alban Institute Publications, 1999), 84 – 85.

¹²⁰ Jack Mezirow, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood* (San Francisco: Jossey – Bass Publishers, 1990), 4.

¹²¹ Ibid., 5.

Biblical passage is one of seeking to understand, true learning can and will take place.¹²²

It is the work of the prophetic Christian teacher to work towards forming, reforming, and transforming in order that the vision of an alternative community is realized.¹²³ It should be the goal of a prophetic Christian educator to provide the tools necessary for transformation to take place.

Some learning is structured learning. This is intentional learning. However, the vast majority of learning is unintentional learning.¹²⁴ This type of learning can take place in many arenas and at any time.¹²⁵ Learning takes place on many different levels. People learn in different ways.¹²⁶ Some learn by seeing, some by hearing, some learn by touch. It is important that a variety of teaching methods and models are used in order for everyone to benefit from the lesson.

But what is meant by an adult Christian education program?

Let us first examine the word adult. Transformation by necessity must involve maturation. A certain level of cognitive ability is necessary before viable decisions can

¹²² Kieran Scott, "Is Adult Education Unique?" in *The Living Light: An Interdisciplinary Review of Catholic Religious Education, Catechesis, and Youth Pastoral Ministry*, (Washington, D. C.: Department of Education United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Fall, 2002), 81.

¹²³ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 171 – 172, 177 – 179.

¹²⁴ Kieran Scott, "Is Adult Education Unique?" in *The Living Light: An Interdisciplinary Review of Catholic religious Education, Catechesis, and Youth and Pastoral Ministry*. (Washington, D. C.: Department of Education, United States Conference of Bishops, Fall, 2002), 79.

¹²⁵ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 42 – 43.

¹²⁶ Carol A. Wehrheim, *Matching Tools and Jobs: Strategies for Teaching and Learning in Blueprints for Building Christian Education*, Douglas D. Cripe ed. (St. Louis, Missouri: Christian Board of Publication, 1997), 45.

be made concerning a person's faith. If we look at the chronological or biological definition of an adult, we are simply looking at the state of being a certain age. This is measured by the calendar and the passage of time.

Our culture's extended span of adolescence has made it more difficult to definitively label one as an adult at a specific age. In our society the age of a legal adult varies with the situation. It may be different for one obtaining a driver's license than it would be for a person to be considered as a suitable parent for the adoption of a child.

Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist that studied developmental psychology¹²⁷, theorized that those reaching adulthood should be in the fourth and final stage of thinking and reasoning. This he called the "formal operations stage". Individuals in this stage do not need concrete objects in order to make rational judgments. They are capable of hypothetical and deductive reasoning. Their thinking patterns are usually multidirectional. They prefer to construct meaning and knowledge for themselves as oppose to accepting it from others without critical reflection.

With this information, a Christian educator discovers that they must challenge the adult learner to think for themselves. Therefore, self-discovery is an important method of learning. Dialectical thought is the highest form of thinking. It is characterized by looking at a subject in ways that takes in account both the "pros and cons" of a course of action. The student becomes investigators and the teacher will act as a facilitator who will simply guide the learning process.

¹²⁷ Jean Piaget, *The Psychology of Intelligence* (London/New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, 1950).

We can define an adult as one that is a rational, objective, and productive human being. This is measured by certain psychological and social criteria. Socially, one may be considered an adult when one is able to work and is independent and self – determined. One must be an autonomous individual to be considered an adult.

The research of Lawrence Kohlberg¹²⁸ expanded on that of Piaget. A very select group of subjects were presented with a moral situation then asked a series of questions that were supposed to uncover the reasons the subjects answered as they did. Kohlberg was interested in why the subjects chose a specific course of action over another course. Kohlberg's research showed that there were significant differences in individual's moral reasoning.

Kohlberg's theory included three levels and six stages of moral development. Level two which included stages three and four was the conventional level. This level was typical of older children and adults. Individuals in this level judged the morality of actions by comparing these actions to conventional rules and regulations. By the third level – the post – conventional level – individuals had certain principals that they attach more value to than mere laws. Human rights and social justice was more important than legalities.

Erik Erikson,¹²⁹ in his study of human identity, identified three stages of adulthood which he numbered stages six, seven, and eight of his theory of human

¹²⁸ Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Meaning and Measurement of Moral Development* (Worcester, Massachusetts: Clark University Press, 1981).

¹²⁹ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980), 100 – 105.

identity. Stage six he termed “intimacy and distantiation versus self – absorption”.

“Distantiation” is the counterpart of intimacy. It is “the readiness to repudiate, to isolate, and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one’s own”.¹³⁰ This is the stage where sexual intimacy with a love interest replaces being isolated with oneself alone.

The seventh stage identified by Erikson he termed “generativity versus stagnation”.¹³¹ Developing from the first stage of adulthood that involves intimacy with a love interest, this next stage is the desire to produce and care for an offspring. It is the production of the next generation (generativity).

Stage eight is termed by Erikson as “integrity versus despair and disgust”. In this stage the individual accepts their life without despair about what might have been.

Ego integrity, therefore, implies an emotional integration which permits participation by followership as well as acceptance of the responsibility of leadership: both must be learned and practiced in religion and in politics, in the economic order and in technology, in aristocratic living, and in the arts and sciences.¹³²

The formation of identity is a lifelong development that the individual gradually travels through mostly unconsciously.¹³³

James Fowler, who studied the development of faith over the human’s life span, believed that human beings were genetically born with the ability to develop faith. In his

¹³⁰ Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Meaning and Measurement of Moral Development*, 100 - 103.

¹³¹ Erik H. Erikson. *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York; W. W. Norton and Company, 1980), 103 – 104.

¹³² Ibid., 104 – 105.

¹³³ Ibid., 122.

book, *Stages of Faith*, Fowler introduced his readers to a six – stage theory of faith development.¹³⁴ Fowler placed people who were chronologically adults, in either stage three, four, five or six. Stage three he called the “synthetic – conventional” stage. Individuals in this stage know why they believe what they believe. Persons in this stage usually conform to the majority. They find it important to follow rules given by persons in authority. Stage four Fowler called the “individual – reflective” stage. In this stage individuals relocate the authority figure from somewhere outside of themselves to within themselves. It is in this stage that one begins to critically reflect on one’s beliefs. With this new autonomy comes a struggle to mature in one’s beliefs and to understand the reasons one believes. Stage five he called the “conjunctive” stage. In this stage persons begin to recognize paradoxes in their faith. It is at this stage that one must learn to live with a “not so perfect” faith and questions that they may not be able to answer. Stage six Fowler called the “universalizing faith” stage. Persons in this stage have the awesome feeling of being one with God. People in this last stage are willing to invest in causes that can be of benefit to their fellow man without looking for any gratification for themselves. Inquiry learning in which a facilitator poses real life situations and problems and then allows the learner to find Biblical solutions to those problems is a good teaching method to use with adults who are in Fowlers theoretical stages three to six.

From these and other social scientist we can see that at a certain age most human beings are ready to make their own decisions concerning their faith. If marginal people

¹³⁴ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981).

are to have a legitimate standing ground against the oppressive social policies of this day, it is necessary to have a truly free God. A true prophetic religious education program can cause a nation that has become numbed in their thinking and feeling to experience a new vitality that will in turn give birth to a new formation and lifestyle.¹³⁵

We can also define an adult as one that is mature, whole and can integrate opposites. This definition of adulthood recognizes an adult as one that has the ability to live with opposites. They can integrate apparent and seemingly contradictory situations in their lives. This definition of adulthood does not reject the rational, the productive or the objective. This definition meets psychological, social, ecological, and religious criteria for what it means to be an adult. Here, adult also means a life process which has the ability to incorporate play and relaxation as part of life. This adult can turn back on themselves and integrate the child that is in them.¹³⁶ This adult is not childish but has the capacity to be childlike. One can never be a real adult without appropriating the child that is within.

Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer in adult education in America, believed that adults learn differently than children and to that end he introduced the theory of “andragogy”¹³⁷ to the United States. Andragogy, first used by the German educator,

¹³⁵ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 171.

¹³⁶ Kieran Scott, “Is Adult Education Unique?” in *The Living Light: An Interdisciplinary Review of Catholic religious Education, Catechesis, and Youth and Pastoral Ministry*, Washington, D. C.: Department of Education, United States Conference of Bishops, (Fall, 2002), 85.

¹³⁷ Malcolm Knowles, *Andragogy in Action: Applying Modern Principles of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey – Bass, 1984).

Alexander Kapp, is the art and science of helping adults learn.¹³⁸ Pedagogy is the art and science of helping children learn.¹³⁹ “Andra”¹⁴⁰ in Greek means “male” or “husband”.

In order to use a term that would include adult females as well as males, there is a growing trend to use a more inclusive word. The word “anthrogogy”¹⁴¹ has been used. I prefer to use the word “anthropogogy”. “Anthropo” in Greek means “of a human being”.¹⁴²

Later, Knowles came to believe that learning, whether by a child or an adult, was more of a continuum from pedagogy to andragogy.¹⁴³ Learning should advance from teacher directed learning to student directed learning. Andragogy is a specific theoretical and practical approach to adult education. The art and science of andragogy have been used in formal educational. However, it has also been of value in non- formal educational settings.

¹³⁸ Sharon B. Merriam, *An Update on Adult Learning Theory* (San Francisco: Jossey – Bass Publishers, 1993).

¹³⁹ Kieran Scott, “Is Adult Education Unique? ” in *The Living Light: An Interdisciplinary Review of Catholic religious Education, Catechesis, and Youth and Pastoral Ministry*. (Washington, D. C.: Department of Education, United States Conference of Bishops, Fall, 2002), 77.

¹⁴⁰ Compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott. *A Greek – English Lexicon*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 138.

¹⁴¹ David C. Trott, Anthrogogy. A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. (Montreal, Quebec, October 1991).

¹⁴² Erin McKean, ed. *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 66.

¹⁴³ Malcolm S. Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (Wilton, Connecticut: Association Press, 1984).

It is believed that adults are self – motivated to learn. Adult learning is self – initiated.¹⁴⁴ The adult learner is a self – directed learner.¹⁴⁵ The adult learner will diagnose their learning needs for themselves.¹⁴⁶ They will formulate their own goals. The adult learner will choose their human and material resources. The adult learner will evaluate their learning experience and determine whether or not they have met their goals.

The adult learner can be engaged in transformational learning. Once new learning has taken place learners should engage in critical reflection. Critical reflection calls into question ones social, historical, and cultural context. When a student asks themselves why they attach a particular meaning to certain topics, this represents critical reflection. One becomes aware of how their social and cultural environment affects how they think.

Andragogy assumes that the adult learner is independent and autonomous.¹⁴⁷ Personal autonomy is the hallmark of self-learning. The adult is autonomous so that they can be self-directed. The adult has greater control over organizing information. The adult learner takes center stage in the learning environment and the teacher fades in the background.¹⁴⁸ Adult education is one that should precipitate conscience rising, facilitate

¹⁴⁴ Malcolm S. Knowles, *Self – Directed Learning* (Chicago: Follett, 1975), 18.

¹⁴⁵ Sharon B. Merriam, *An Update on Adult Learning Theory: New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (San Francisco: Jossey – Bass Publishers, 1993).

¹⁴⁶ Kieran Scott, “Is Adult Education Unique? ” in *The Living Light: An Interdisciplinary Review of Catholic religious Education, Catechesis, and Youth and Pastoral Ministry*. (Washington, D. C.: Department of Education, United States Conference of Bishops, Fall, 2002), 79.

¹⁴⁷ Rosemary S. Caffarella, “Self – Directed Learning” in Sharon B. Merriam, ed. *An Update on Adult Learning Theory* (San Francisco: Jossey – Bass Publishers, 1993), 25 – 26.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 – 26.

it, and reinforce transformation.¹⁴⁹ The adult learner is the provocateur. They provoke learning.

Learning is perceived as a change of conscience, a change of awareness. It can take place anywhere. In order to ascertain the validity of the new meaning schemes and the new meaning perspective an individual enters into critical discourse with others. In this way the individuals new patterns of thought which is a private matter, is made public. Through critical discussion¹⁵⁰ and the feedback of others, an individual can better understand the change that has taken place in their thought patterns and if the change is of a true value.

Exploring alternative thoughts is the next step. This is where critical reflection may occur.¹⁵¹ Transformative learning takes place when individuals engage in reflective thought processes stemming from questions concerning their meaning schemes and their meaning perspectives.¹⁵² Then the perspective may be changed and an alternative perspective can be applied. This new perspective is integrated into the individuals meaning schemes.

For adults, non – structured learning experiences are motivated by interest and the need to know. Adults have many life experiences that they can build upon to

¹⁴⁹ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 50 – 51.

¹⁵⁰ Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey – Bass, 1994).

¹⁵¹ Stephen D. Brookfield, *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey – Bass, 1986), 9 – 20.

¹⁵² Jane E. Regan. “Renewing the Prophetic Voice: Insights From Adult Education Theory. Preceedings – APRRE Annual Meeting. 1997, 107.

help them learn new things. As people age they do not lose the ability to learn, however as they grow older the method by which they learn may change. Non – structured learning is important for adults because they can take control of their own learning experiences.

Adult learners must become comfortable with the process of planning their own educational directions. They must become the driving force behind the way that they evaluate their own learning. This is important if they are to become personally autonomous and self – directing in their own educational landscape.

Emancipatory learning is based on critical reflection.¹⁵³ Here, an examination takes place of previously held assumptions and decisions are made as to keep the assumption or to change it. Using the method of critical discourse, individuals are better able to obtain a consensus that allows them to validate their thoughts concerning their new perspective. Public discourse of one's thoughts is a very important part of learning in which one can reflect on their meaning schemes and meaning perspectives and the assumptions that are supported by them. This is a prophetic form of religion. This calls for critical and creative new forms of response to what it means to be Christian in postmodern times. Therefore, self-discovery is an important component of adult learning.

Learning should foster relationships.¹⁵⁴ The formation of meaningful and nurturing

¹⁵³ Jane E. Regan, *Toward an Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 79.

¹⁵⁴ S. Sue Amyx, "Seeing the Possibilities: Christian Education Models in *Blueprints for Building Christian Education*, Douglas D. Cripe ed. (St. Louis, Missouri: Christian Board of Publication, 1997), 10.

relationships is a major socio – emotional milestone for the adult. The Christian educator can provide opportunities for the adult to form healthy friendships with other Christian adults.¹⁵⁵ A good adult education program should encourage participation from different races, ethnicities, and genders.

A good Christian education instructor will be sure that the materials being used are intelligible and understandable for the student. It will be necessary to compare the religion being taught to some “otherness”. Because the “other” reveals to us ourselves, it is necessary to compare in order for understanding to take place.

A prophetic religious education program must have adults as its focus.¹⁵⁶ They in turn can help to teach the younger generations. The aim should be to teach from childhood toward adulthood.¹⁵⁷ It should be the goal to inspire Christians to become mature in their thoughts on Christianity.

It is the work of the prophetic religious educator to propose futures that are alternatives to the reality of today.¹⁵⁸ It is the work of a prophetic teacher to work towards forming, reforming, and transforming in order that the vision of an alternative community is realized.¹⁵⁹ It should be the goal of a prophetic religious educator to

¹⁵⁵ Malcolm S. Knowles and Hulda Knowles, *Introduction to Group Dynamics* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice – Hall, 1972), 40 – 64.

¹⁵⁶ Jane E. Regan, *Renewing the Prophetic Voice: Insights from Adult Education Theory*. Proceedings – APRRE Annual Meeting. 1997.

¹⁵⁷ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 49.

¹⁵⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 13.

¹⁵⁹ Gabriel Moran, *No Ladder to the Sky* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 13.

provide the tools necessary for transformation to take place.

Those groups who are discovering that God is asking new questions and leading in new directions may not make the headlines of the evening news. But in their attentiveness to the “still small voice”, they are heralding a new creation in which curriculum has a vital role.¹⁶⁰

As prophetic Christian educators, we must be willing to let go of maintaining things as they are and have always seemed to be. We must claim the rewritten future that has been promised to us through the Creator’s covenant with us. It should be the vocation of every prophetic religious educator to ignite and keep alive the flame of imagination. It is the prophet that is to propose continuous discourse for the purpose of change. If you change the way a person thinks, you change their lives.

¹⁶⁰ Mary Boys, “Curriculum Thinking From A Roman Catholic Perspective”, *Religious Education*. Volume 75, Number 5 (September to October 1980), 524 - 527.

Chapter 5

The Riverside Church in the City of New York

“The future of our world depends upon our learning to hear each other across the serious divides of religious intolerance.”¹⁶¹

Rev. Dr. James A Forbes, Jr.

Riverside Church is located at 490 Riverside Drive at 120th street in Morningside Heights. Appendix A shows a picture of the exterior of the church from the north east corner. In this area the church is blessed by auspicious neighbors such as Union Theological Seminary, the Jewish Theological Seminary, The Manhattan School of Music, Columbia University, Barnard College, and Teacher’s College. There is also The Interfaith Church building, lovingly known as the “God Box”, which houses many religious organizations including New York Theological Seminary. It is my belief that the community - at - large will be interested in knowing more about other faith traditions. The Multifaith Curriculum series will be part of the Adult Christian Education Ministry of Riverside.

The Riverside Church is an interdenominational, interracial, and international

¹⁶¹ *The Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: The Riverside Church, 1978), 14.

church.¹⁶² It is incorporated under New York State law as a legally independent Baptist church.¹⁶³ The church is affiliated with two Protestant denominations: the United Church of Christ and the American Baptist Church.¹⁶⁴ Riverside is a church that is known for its diversity. The congregants are representative of not only a microcosm of New York City but the communities of the world. The members, along with the ministers and staff, carry out the work toward the mission of the church.¹⁶⁵

The clergy and members of the congregation have demonstrated an interest in celebrating spiritual beliefs other than their own. Guest speakers from other faith traditions have spoken at Riverside. An “Americans in Healing” service was held at the Riverside Church on September 16, 2002, for the victims of the September 11th tragedy in which Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and Christians participated.¹⁶⁶ Riverside hosted a forum on Brian Brown’s book *Forensic Scriptures*¹⁶⁷ in which there was discussion around different faiths; particularly the Islamic faith. Riverside’s “Mission Statement”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² *The Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: The Riverside Church, 1978), 60.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Peter J. Paris et al., *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 3.

¹⁶⁷ Brian Arthur Brown, *Forensic Scriptures: Critical Analysis of Scripture and What the Qur’an Revels About the Bible* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2009)

¹⁶⁸ “The Riverside Church seeks to be a community of faith. Its members are united in the worship of God known in Jesus, the Christ, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The mission of The Riverside Church is to serve God through word and witness; to treat all human beings as sisters and brothers; and to foster responsible stewardship of all God’s creation. The Riverside Church commits itself to welcoming all persons, celebrating the diversity found in a congregation broadly inclusive of persons from different backgrounds of race, economic class,

attests to the fact that people of diverse backgrounds are welcomed at the church.

The Riverside Church proclaims to be an open and affirming congregation that is broadly ecumenical in spirit and in practice.¹⁶⁹ From the time the church was founded it has been distinguished by the open - minded and outspoken ministers that led it. Riverside has worked to be both a prophetic voice internationally and a beloved community locally.

The Riverside Church began as the Norfolk Street Baptist Church in an inconspicuous meeting house on the lower east side of Manhattan in 1841 until 1860. Its first pastor was George Benedict who served from 1841 to 1848. The church then became known as Fifth Avenue Baptist Church from 1860 until 1922. Thomas B. Armitage was the pastor from 1848 to 1889. W.H.P. Faunce served as pastor from 1889 to 1899. He was followed by Rufus Johnston from 1901 to 1906; Charles Aked, from 1907 to 1911; and Cornelius Woelfkin from 1912 to 1926. The church's name was changed to The Park Avenue Baptist Church between 1922 and 1929. On November 20, 1927, the cornerstone was laid for a new church and in December, 1929 the church's name was changed to The Riverside Church. On October 5, 1930 The Riverside Church

religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation. Members are called to an individual and collective quality of life that leads to personal spiritual, and social transformation, witnessing to God's saving purposes for all creation. Therefore, The Riverside Church pledges itself to education, reflection, and action for peace and justice, the realization of the vision of heavenly banquet where all are loved and blessed."

(Approved by the Religious Society of The Riverside Church on May 17, 1992).

The Riverside Church in the City of New York (New York: The Riverside Church, 1978 Revised 2002), 60.

¹⁶⁹ Peter J. Paris, "The Public Witness of the Riverside Church: An Ethical Assessment", Peter J. Paris ed., *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 274 – 275.

in the City of New York celebrated its first Sunday service.¹⁷⁰

At that time the church was concerned with interpreting the Bible. The question of whether a fundamental or modern approach should be used caused controversy.¹⁷¹ Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick was a key figure on this matter. He was believed to be a pacifist and he often preached against the evils of war.¹⁷² However, he was also a supporter of the U. S. involvement in World War 2.

The church became interested in Fosdick and led by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. he was called to be the pastor in 1925.¹⁷³ However, Fosdick would only consider taking the position if the church agreed to three conditions. First, he wanted the only requirement for membership to the church to be the affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ. The second condition was that any Christian who sought admission to the church would be welcomed regardless of their denomination. And thirdly, Fosdick wanted the church to be moved to a neighborhood that was thought to be critical to the life of all of New York City. There, a larger building would be constructed and the ministry of the church would be expanded.¹⁷⁴

The church resolved to be nonsectarian and inclusive in nature.¹⁷⁵ To that end it

¹⁷⁰ *The Riverside Church in the City of New York*, (New York: The Riverside Church, 2002), 6-7.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷² Peter J. Paris, "The Public Witness of the Riverside Church: An Ethical Assessment", Peter J. Paris ed., *The History of The Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 245.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷⁴ *The Riverside Church in the City of New York*, (New York: The Riverside Church, 2002), 6.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

was decided that the church would share its gifts with individually selected causes on the local, national, and international levels and not to any one denominational interest. The church welcomed people of all races, ethnicities, economic and social status. It made a dual commitment to both worshiping God and Christian service to man.¹⁷⁶

For its convictions to be solidly founded, the congregation determined to welcome diversity rather than tolerate it, to demonstrate a belief that liberty of the individual is based not on the idea that what one *is* is unimportant, but that it is too important to be regimented and controlled by external authority.¹⁷⁷

Fosdick retired in 1946 and Robert James McCracken became the new pastor.¹⁷⁸

McCracken preached against military escalation and was an advocate for racial justice.¹⁷⁹

Ernest T. Campbell followed as pastor when McCracken retired in 1968. Campbell brought to the forefront the problems caused by the Vietnam War and racism.¹⁸⁰

Dr. Campbell resigned in 1976 and the following year William Sloane Coffin became Senior Minister of the Riverside Church.¹⁸¹ Dr. Coffin spoke against the arms

¹⁷⁶ *The Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: The Riverside Church, 2002), 9.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ James Hudnut – Beumler, “The Riverside Church and the Development of Twentieth – Century American Protestantism”, in *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*, Peter J. Paris ed. (New York; New York University Press, 2004), 34.

¹⁷⁹ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, “The Riverside Church and the Development of Twentieth – Century American Protestantism”, in *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*, Peter J. Paris ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 74 - 84.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 84 - 94.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 95 - 107.

race and prodded the congregation to consider it an obligation in the face of what he called “the warring madness”.¹⁸²

“...his message was one of peacemaking in the biblical understanding of forgiveness, love, and justice.”¹⁸³

On June 1, 1989, Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr. became the fifth Senior Minister. He continued the legacy of his predecessors. Dr. Forbes is a champion for the poor, racial and social justice, and the inclusivity of all no matter their race, color, religion, gender, age, nation origin, sexual orientation, or class.¹⁸⁴

With all that is wonderful about The Riverside Church, there are also many problems. One of the most agonizing problems has been plaguing the church for decades. The church commissioned Dudley Hamilton Associates, led by Joyce Dudley, to develop a strategic plan for the years of 2005 to 2010. In the plan it is noted ...

“While every Senior Minister who has presided at Riverside has benefited from the statue and exposure that their position both requires and allows for, each one has also endured the challenges that come with it.”¹⁸⁵

Riverside is governed by the congregation.¹⁸⁶ The membership of the church is the deciding force behind all policies, programming and administration of the church.

¹⁸² *The Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: The Riverside Church, 1978), 14.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, “The Riverside Church and the Development of Twentieth – Century American Protestantism”, in *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*, Peter J. Paris ed. (New York; New York University Press, 2004), 107 - 119.

¹⁸⁵ Dudley Hamilton Associates, Inc., *Meeting the 21st Century Challenge: The Riverside Church Strategic Plan 2005 – 2010* (New York: Dudley Hamilton Associates, 2005), 53.

¹⁸⁶ *The Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: The Riverside Church, 1978), 60.

With the exception of Dr. Fosdick, every Senior Minister has had issues with defining the Senior Minister's authority in the church's structure. Also at issue is the Senior Minister's accountability to the church and its governing body. Of the church, Fosdick once said...

“Prophetic, germinative ideas are here; there are open doors of possibility for good as well as evil....”¹⁸⁷

In its findings, Dudley Hamilton Associates noted that there were three key themes that needed attending to in order for The Riverside Church to go forward. The first was that the church's core values invoke loyalty and respect from all who know and is associated with the institution. They also found that conflict and dissension causes people to shun Riverside.¹⁸⁸

The second was stated as such...

“Caught in a governance stranglehold: Who is in charge?-left unattended, TRC's foundation will crumble.”¹⁸⁹

Dr. Forbes retired on June 1, 2007 amid tension between him and some members of the governing body of the church. After a two year search for a new Senior Minister, Riverside Church called Rev. Dr. Brad R. Braxton. Dr. Braxton began his tenure on Sunday September 14, 2008. On Sunday August 2, 2009, at Sunday morning service, Dr. Braxton's resignation was accepted by the Church. He had not lasted one year.

¹⁸⁷ *The Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: The Riverside Church, 1978), 3.

¹⁸⁸ Dudley Hamilton Associates Inc. Meeting the 21st Century Challenge: The Riverside church Strategic Plan 2005 – 2010 (New York: Dudley Hamilton Associates, 2005), 52.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

Riverside is presently searching for its next Senior Minister.

The third theme noted by Dudley Hamilton Associates, was one that Dr. Braxton preached on many times in his short tenure at Riverside. Many at Riverside feel that an increase need for connection with God and an increase in spirituality is necessary for Riverside to go forward.

In the preface of the strategic plan Joyce Dudley wrote:

Many might ask, what's so important about *this* plan? I believe, as many involved in this strategic planning process do, that The Riverside Church is at an historic moment in its development and that God is calling it to begin to shape the next phase of its development as a flagship faith based institution. It is significant that this call is being made at a time that is ripe with challenges of great magnitude for progressive Christian organizations. It makes one wonder if God is doing so to help The Riverside Church and other progressive organizations see the opportunities that are before them.¹⁹⁰

Harry Fosdick wrote a hymn for the dedication of the new Riverside Church which took place on February 8, 1931.¹⁹¹ “God of Grace and God of Glory”, which the hymn was later named, became the signature hymn of the Riverside Church and an anthem of liberal Protestant churches.¹⁹² can be found in Appendix C, Fosdick recalled...

“That was more than a hymn to me when we sang it that day- it was a very urgent personal prayer. For with all my hopeful enthusiasm about the new venture there was inevitably much humble and sometimes fearful

¹⁹⁰ Dudley Hamilton Associates, Inc. Meeting the 21st Century Challenge: The Riverside Church Strategic plan 2005 – 2010 (New York: Dudley Hamilton, 2005), 4.

¹⁹¹ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, “The Riverside Church and the Development of Twentieth – Century American Protestantism”, in *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*, Peter J. Paris ed. (New York; New York University Press, 2004), 69.

¹⁹² James Hudnut - Beumler, “The Riverside Church and the Development of Twentieth – Century American Protestantism”, in *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*, Peter J. Paris ed. (New York; New York University Press, 2004), 21.

apprehension.”¹⁹³

In the foreword of the book *The Riverside Church in the City of New York*, Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr. wrote...

“We pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to help us keep faith with the hope expressed in the dedicating hymn of our founder, Harry Emerson Fosdick.”¹⁹⁴

It is my hope that introducing Riversiders to diverse faith traditions and their sacred texts can contribute in some small way to the heritage of The Riverside Church.

In successive religious climates of fear of being characterized as “not Christian”, or a later fear of decline, other liberal Protestant institutions have chosen to avoid dealing with fundamentalism, poverty, race, sexuality, nuclear defense, immigration, and other faiths. Riverside has rarely failed to embrace a new issue or group of people in American culture.¹⁹⁵

Riversiders did not fail. They enthusiastically embraced Bible Walk, learning about Judaism, and journeying to Israel.

“Despite its own internal controversies, the Riverside Church has remained a solid rock of faith that can provide an example of a congregation meeting the challenges of the new millennium.”¹⁹⁶

There were twenty – five to forty participants that attended the sessions. Many came

¹⁹³ *The Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: The Riverside Church, 1978), 42.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹⁵ James Hudnut – Beumler, “The Riverside Church and the Development of Twentieth – Century American Protestantism”, in *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*, Peter J. Paris ed. (New York; New York University Press, 2004), 51.

¹⁹⁶ Lawrence H. Mamiya, “The Riverside Church and the Development of Twentieth – Century American Protestantism”, in *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*, Peter J. Paris ed. (New York; New York University Press, 2004), 337.

from other churches. Some were not regular church goers. Some participants had a great deal of experience with study groups, but for others this was the first time they were involved in an in-depth study as adults.

Riversiders possess many interests and talents which they are eager to share and explore in community. There are individuals who revel in explorations of the mind and spirit. Those who attend Christian Education study groups engage in insightful comments and challenging questions. Twenty - six adults and four youths traveled from Riverside to Israel on July 11, 2012.

Chapter 6

The Process

If caricatures and incorrect ideas on the other religions exists, practical steps should be taken to right the situation. A planned study of the other religion is needed if relationships are not to stagnate at the superficial level of generalizations and clichés.¹⁹⁷

Francis Cardinal Arinze

On the next few pages, I would like to share, from Laura Harris' and my perspective, some of the events that resulted in the realization of Bible Walk: A Journey from the Riverside Church to Ancient Israel.

Anesta Vannoy – Kwame - Curriculum Developer for Bible Walk

I first entered the doors of The Riverside Church in the City of New York on the first Sunday of February 2008. That same day I was invited to join the Adult Christian Education Committee. Laura Harris was already a member of the committee. I became friends with Laura and others and we formed a group that we named “Sankofa”. “Sankofa” is an Akan word that means that we must go back and reclaim our past so we can move forward. For me it means “to

¹⁹⁷ Francis A. Arinze, (*Religions for Peace: A Call for Solidarity to the Religions of the World* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 55.

remember”. Only when we remember our past, will we be able to understand why and how we came to be who we are today. The purpose of the group was to read and reflect on Sacred Texts, especially the Hebrew Bible.

Laura Harris - Executive Director for Bible Walk

Approximately two years before the emergence of Bible Walk I was sitting in my Archaeology class and was amazed at the different artifacts and the scholarly process that was conducted which gave way to people, their cultural behavior, ritual practices, worship and burial practices. It was fascinating to see and learn the thousands of years they are able to tie to the artifacts.

It was during my weeks in class that I started to think about tying archaeology into biblical narratives and the geography of the biblical land. I had shared my experience with colleagues of the Sankofa Group. I talked to them about tying in the history and background of the biblical stories with genealogy and collectively we began to explore the depths of the stories beginning with Genesis. We started to connect the dots with genealogy and made phenomenal discoveries. We even went further by exploring texts outside the biblical canon and the information was even more profound.

We would have in-depth discussions about creating a biblical timeline that we could share in our biblical classes and maybe explore some of the artifacts outside of bible study. In 2009, we presented the idea to Rev. Dr. Arnold Thomas who, at that time, was the Minister of Education. He decided that the idea was

great but suggested we put the plan on the back burner for a while. Of course, I was not happy with the decision. But we all in the Sankofa Group continued our studies. We continued to explore the idea of tying archaeology and history with biblical scripture in order to develop more interesting biblical study programs.

Sankofa had a second meeting with Dr. Thomas. During this meeting we brought in scripture and tried to explain our vision from the biblical perspective and tying in biblical history. Dr. Thomas thought we were only looking at it from one side and wasn't convinced of the idea of connecting history from that perspective.

Anesta - After September 11, 2001, I had become painfully aware of how religion can be a catalyst to hatred and violence. I watched and heard many clergy and ministers demonize other faith traditions and the adherents of other faiths. As an educator for over thirty years, I began to formulate an idea of how this problem could be addressed through education.

Laura - As my semester at school was about to come to an end, I approached my professor Dr. Saul Troen, and had an in-depth discussion with him about what I had been working on along with the Sankofa Group. He thought the idea was great and because he wanted to get an "in" with the Riverside church to present his video phones, he agreed to meet with Dr. Thomas and me at Riverside.

Initially, Dr. Thomas and Saul Troen found that they had a few things in

common including biblical teaching. Finally, Dr. Thomas was more attentive and wanted to hear more about the idea. It was during the next meeting that we came up with the idea of tying in studies abroad to expand upon history and archeology. The idea would be to build a unique bible study program at the Riverside Church and expand it to tie into biblical study programs abroad, first national, then internationally.

The next step was to make a presentation to the communication department of Riverside to introduce the videophone to them. During the first 15 minutes of the presentation they were not impressed with the videophone hardware. So in essence, we were back to square one.

We continued to meditate and pray. Later in the midst of our discussions we came up with the idea to do a trip to the land which the bible spoke about. Since we couldn't study abroad, why not bring the people to the Holy Land and study abroad on the land itself. This idea, I thought was the most brilliant and immediately we met with Dr. Thomas again. He was totally surprised and hesitant at the same time. Dr. Thomas came to me several weeks later and said that he was also approached by a Riverside congregant and they inquired as to why we had not planned a trip to Israel. He immediately introduced the person to me and told them that I was working on a trip of that nature.

Several weeks after that Dr. Thomas came to me and said "Let's go to Israel". I screamed for joy and we set-up a meeting right away to go over the particulars. I shared the great news with the Sankofa team and our Hebrew group

who was even more excited.

Anesta - As soon as I heard the news I began to formulate ideas of a curriculum that would introduce members of Riverside Church to the land of Israel. I researched theories of approaches to adult learning. I came up with a two part plan.

First, a curriculum would be created that would inform participants of the theological implications of the sites and land of Israel. Then the participants would be invited to journey to Israel to see and experience this Holy Land for themselves.

As part of the curriculum, a tool would be developed that would bring to light, to both facilitators and participants, hidden prejudices that they may not be aware they harbor. The curriculum should advance religious literacy for the participants' own faith tradition as well as other faith traditions they may be investigating. The methods and practices of anthropogogy could be used to foster a new narrative, promoting respect and understanding of various faith traditions. Natural contact points between Riversiders and members of other religions needed to be developed as assets to engage and inform Riversiders about other cultures and faith traditions. Facilitators and participants must have basic knowledge of their own faith tradition.¹⁹⁸ This would be very important. The intension of the curriculum would not be to proselytize but to inform.

¹⁹⁸ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 50 – 51.

Laura - We immediately took the liberty to lock in the airline rates. Dr. Thomas instructed Riverside to secure the seats with a small deposit. That's when I knew that this program was very real and that we were going to go places with a program in place of this sort.

Anesta – In order to accomplish my goals I needed certain skills. In 1973 I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the College of Mount Saint Vincent having majored in English and minored in education and psychology. I was a New York City Public School teacher for grades Prek. to 6th grade from 1974 until my retirement in June, 2009. I studied theology and ministry at New York Theological Seminary and was awarded a Masters of Divinity from New York Theological Seminary in 2005. I studied Christian Education for children, youths, and adults, as well as administration in a non – public school at Fordham University and was awarded a Master's of Science in Educational Leadership, Administration and Polity from Fordham University in 2012. This course of study has prepared me to teach and administer effectively in a Christian education setting. In 2007 I entered the doctorate program in the multifaith track at New York Theological Seminary. It was determined by my site team, my mentor, Rev. Dr. Dale Irvin, and members of my class that in order to support my goals and strategies for Bible Walk I needed to improve in three areas. One, I needed to improve my knowledge and skills of the use of technological tools such as the computer and the internet. I needed to have a command of these tools in order to collect

information, create Powerpoints, and communicate with participants, facilitators, members and staff of the Riverside Church and other stakeholders. In the course of working on this project, I did improve my technical knowledge and skills.

Secondly, it was believed that I should improve my administrative skills. This was accomplished with my studies in administration at Fordham University. Third, it was believed that I should study Hebrew and Greek. I needed to be able to exegete ancient text. In order to eliminate as much misconception as possible that may be caused by redactors and translators,¹⁹⁹ it was necessary for me to be able to read sacred text in their original language or as close to the original language as available. To this end I have studied Hebrew and Greek at New York Theological Seminary and the Riverside Church.

From September 2009, I began to research Hebrew and Christian Scripture searching for what the Bible says about how we are to relate to our neighbors. I attended various interfaith conferences. I became involved with interfaith organizations. I began to write a curriculum for the trip to Israel. The curriculum was designed to cover the details of the trip based on the itinerary. I worked on the curriculum for over two and a half years.

Laura - From that moment on, it was full steam ahead. We had a number of meetings to design a trip that was spiritually driven and one that was in accord with the ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ. It was like a dream come true.

¹⁹⁹ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr. *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 161.

We had discussed many names for the trip including, “Walking the Bible”, “Walk the Bible”, “In the Footsteps of the Bible”, “In the Footsteps of Jesus”, etc. However, the one that we decided on was, “*Bible Walk : A Journey from The Riverside Church to Ancient Israel*”. It had a certain edge and was quite right for what we were trying to accomplish.

Anesta – I designed a curriculum for members of the Riverside church, members of the Christian community and others that would introduce them to the archaeology and history of the sights to be visited. Then, using Scripture, participants discussed the theological implications of the sights and what those implications would mean to Jews and Christians.

I created several tools that could be used to evaluate various components of the curriculum that were completed by participants and facilitators. I observed the sessions in order to determine if participants were gaining new knowledge. It was important to note significant participant behavior and their response to the sessions. I watched to see if the participants were engaged in the teachings. I noted if they shared their thoughts and reactions with partners, in small groups or with the larger group. When the participants returned from Israel, I asked them questions about the trip and the sessions. I wanted to know if the sessions had any impact on their trip experience.

Laura - I put together a business proposal and financial model built around the trip. These plans went through numerous revisions and changes as we continued to build the program.

Saul Troen was very instrumental in helping us make connections with colleagues in Israel and through the consulate office here in New York. These institutions were very helpful and well connected with government and other important agencies and institutions. We cut through a lot of red tape thanks to Saul.

We spent almost two years putting together a very extensive program. We worked very closely with the Israel Tour company representatives designing a unique Christian based tour, specifically in the footsteps of Jesus. In addition, Anesta Kwame-Vannoy was very helpful in designing the curriculum for the program. The classes were held on Sunday afternoons from February 2012 through July 2012.

Anesta – The Bible Walk classes were co – facilitated by Laura, myself and other members of the Sankofa group. In addition we had several guest speakers and facilitators including Rev. Dr. Arnold I. Thomas and Dr. Saul Troen.

Laura created several publicity tools to advertise the classes. The Bible Walk sessions and the trip were announced in Riverside's Sunday bulletins. Announcements were made from the pulpit by members of the clergy and members of the class. After service on Sundays, during Fellowship Hour, the

Adult Christian Education table had flyers and sign-up sheets for the sessions and the trip to Israel. Information and flyers on the sessions and the trip was passed out in church meetings, concerts, and other functions that were held at Riverside. Flyers were sent to New York Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary and the Jewish Theological Seminary. Laura sent out weekly email updates and information about the classes and the trip to class members and other concerned parties. During the month of March 2012, the Bible Walk facilitators and participants took a trip to see the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Discovery Channel Museum.

Laura - We were able to present a comprehensive program that transpired into a 14-day spiritual trip whereby the people were actually able to participate in the trip via biblical study while walking and experiencing the Holy Land with the Bible in hand.

Anesta - On July 8, 2012 we had a Bible Walk “Send Off” Celebration. Along with delicious food and beverages, there were last minute reminders, and a great deal of excitement.

On July 11, 2012, participants and facilitators left New York City for Israel. They returned on July 24, 2012.

Chapter 7

Notes on Curriculum Design for an American Christian Church

“You priest should be eager to spread knowledge, and everyone should come to you for instruction, because you speak for me, the Lord All – Powerful.”
(Malachi 2:7 Contemporary English Version)

The world is in the throngs of a “New Age”. This fact should be the driving force behind the teaching ministry in the Christian Church. How would members of the New Age church know how to conduct themselves if they are not properly taught? This is the job of the teaching ministry of the church. But what should be taught? What should be included in the curriculum?

What is curriculum?

The word “curriculum” is a noun that etymologically comes from the Latin word “currere” meaning “to run”, “race course”, or “the course to be run”.²⁰⁰ It is a set of courses and their contents. A curriculum is an ongoing plan of education.²⁰¹ It is courses that are offered by an institution of education. A curriculum is planned, institutes

²⁰⁰ Maria Harris, *Fashion me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Westminster: John Knox Press, 1989), 55 - 56.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 62 – 63.

teaching strategies and is goal directed. A curriculum provides a framework for identifying the key critical educational issues that will be taught. Curriculum gives educators linguistic forms, conceptional and theoretical categories to help them make decisions. Curriculum categories help us to identify what values we hold, what resources we are placing in our classrooms, who we are working with, and what our aims are.

The curriculum should be designed as a journey; a life walk.²⁰² The student is the pilgrim that is probing and exploring. The curriculum should “lead people out” to quest, to discover, to reinvision, and to imagine.

...a catechism would have to look somewhat different from the classic kind, which gives an immediate answer to each question. It would have to lead us on a course of thinking things through with question after question after question, thus inviting us to search things out for ourselves. Whenever possible, this search should take place within the context of mutual sharing, especially in the work of lay training which will have to occupy a central position in our church life.²⁰³

The educator is a fellow pilgrim, a guide, and a mentor. The teacher and the students are fellow companions taking a journey with no exact anticipated outcomes. The experience should be communal because there is a need for other people to bond with and share ideas with. We discover God in the presence of ordinary relationships.

The curriculum designer must be bilingual. They must have the language of faith and the faith tradition. This is the language of creeds, liturgy, and catechesis. Everyone in the church must be familiar with this first language. In order to take people on a journey they must be able to speak the language of their faith denomination.

²⁰² Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 67 – 68.

²⁰³ Johannes C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966), 80.

The second language must be the language of the public. People speak religiously in everyday discourse. Religion's influence is often felt in the arts, movies, music, paintings, and literature. The public language must be understood as a point of entry of religious discourse for people that are not usually involved in a faith tradition. The starting point of religious education should be something that people are familiar with.²⁰⁴ The curriculum should be designed as to attend to the ordinary, everyday life of the learner and with what is of concern to them. Curriculum design should impact on the life of the learner.²⁰⁵

Curriculum development is both practical and artistic. The curriculum must be well thought out in order for it to be practical. Planning should be viewed as an essential part of the teaching ministry. The curriculum must be a systematic vehicle of planned events. Planning should involve the entire church. This can be accomplished by taking pains to see to it that all church members are given an opportunity to have a voice in the planning process.

In order that teaching and learning does not become stagnant in the church, change must be continually taking place. But change cannot be haphazard. It must be planned for. Change cannot occur on a whim. It must add to the educational program of the church.

The curriculum of a church must reflect the theology, beliefs, and mission of the church. The curriculum of a Christian church imparts Bible – based knowledge to

²⁰⁴ Eric Donald Hirsh, Jr., *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 23.

²⁰⁵ Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, *Modeling God: Religious Education for Tomorrow* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 23.

congregants. It must be educational. Education is a form of human activity which is in tension with and challenges religion. Information is necessary for personal growth and knowledge is essential for individual development. The curriculum must be age and grade appropriate for its audience. It should be designed so that it can be measured to see if it meets the goals of the institution.

Uniformity of the lessons helps to keep the congregation as a whole on target as to the mission of the church. The teaching ministry of the church includes instruction in church lore and evangelism.²⁰⁶ The curriculum helps prepare congregants to do a task. In the church we want people to act on their faith. The curriculum of a church is reflected in the way members of the congregation behave. Building a strong curriculum can help to motivate others to understand the foundation of the church.

The curriculum should augment the church's mission.²⁰⁷ Curriculum is not just the supplies used. It is using the supplies to drive the doctrine of the church. Many denominations produce a variety of curriculums for the use of churches in their denominations. Individual churches that use the curriculums of their denominations must add to or make changes in the denominational courses in order to make the curriculum relevant for and to meet the needs their congregations. When we design a curriculum we are creating synergy between our participants, the facilitators, the texts, and the resources we use. The curriculum should be a reflection of the experiences of the members of the

²⁰⁶ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 66 – 67.

²⁰⁷ Charles R. Foster, *Educating Congregations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 125 – 126.

congregation in the church.²⁰⁸ It should reflect the various cultures in the church.

Curriculum is designing educational environments. There are three things in the educational environment – the learner, the text or tradition, and the community or social culture life or structure. There is a need for a clear organizing principle which function is to provide guidance as the curriculum designer plans the curriculum.

The curriculum should be organized in such a manner as to be taught through worship, service, stewardship, fellowship, liturgy, and every church activity, as well as the education that occurs in the classroom. Therefore, the organizing principle of the curriculum must be the whole church's involvement in the whole church's activities.

The organizing principle must also be theologically, biblically, scientifically, educationally and practically sound. This principal must mirror the beliefs of the church and its people.²⁰⁹ Christian education must reflect relationships between humans and God, other humans, animals, nature and history all in a biblical manner. It must reveal the process by which humans develop and then open up a meaningful future for them.²¹⁰

Should Christian education curriculum be knowledge – content based or should it be a guided experience? Should the content of the curriculum be “biblically – centered” or “life – centered”? A good Christian education curriculum must be Bible based and

²⁰⁸ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 63 – 64.

²⁰⁹ Campbell D. Wyckoff, “Understanding Your Church Curriculum”, *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*. Volume 3, Number 1 (1970), 82.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

address questions that participants have stemming from their day – to – day lives.²¹¹ In order for the curriculum to be a balance of Biblical information as well as a guide for lives²¹², it must empower participants with knowledge and Biblical facts. It must apply the mind to studying and understanding the policies of any particular faith tradition. It must also be experiential in nature. The teaching/learning dynamic must be one of active participation. Both children and adults should and can be involved in activities of outreach.²¹³ Activities such as these far supersede a curriculum that is solely based on memorization of Bible verses and church doctrine. However, knowledge of Bible verses and church doctrine can be learned and reinforced through Christian activities. It is important that learners become involved in things that touch their lives.

Religious education must be inter - religious²¹⁴ and still delineate the specifications of its own faith tradition.

In a multi – religio – cultural world, a Christian theology aware of the universal and prevenient presence and activity of the Spirit cannot but be open to the truths of the Spirit wherever they may be found. In that sense, a pneumatological theology of religions will therefore both require and enable a reconstruction of Christian systematic theology that engages the truths that are discovered in

²¹¹ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 63.

²¹² Terri Hord Owens, “Introducing Builders to the Tools: Help for Teachers Using Curriculum” in *Blueprints for Building Christian Education*, Douglas D. Cripe ed. (St. Louis, Missouri: Christian board of Publication, 1997), 42.

²¹³ Kieran Scott, “Is Adult Education Unique? Probing Some Premises and Possibilities” *The Living Light*, Volume 39, Number 1, (2002), 84.

²¹⁴ Kieran Scott, “Continuity and Change in Religious Education: Building on the Past, Re – Imagining the Future” in Oliver Brennan, ed. *Critical Issues in Religious Education* (USA: Veritas Press, 2005), 96.

the global interreligious context.²¹⁵

It must be intergenerational.²¹⁶ The curriculum should not be one of imperialistic teaching that declares its beliefs to be the only legitimate beliefs. We must foster religious tolerance but also remembering that a person cannot intelligently engage in discussions of religion if they are illiterate concerning their own religious practices and beliefs.

A curriculum should be imagined as a work of art.²¹⁷ It is an artistic approach to education.²¹⁸ This is where we see the imaginary skills. The creative skills are on display. It is all about design so it should have a rhythm and flow to it. It is not only what is in the design but how it is arranged. The curriculum designer must know how the teaching process, the texts, the students, the environment, and the facilitators function and interact. The artist creates environments that ushers us to truth and shows us the moral perspective. There is a sense of beauty. Curriculum design is the mobilizing of creative powers in such a way that lives are affected. Curriculum design flows from the patterns of prayer and worship.

The curriculum of an institution is influenced by the ideological views of that

²¹⁵ Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal – Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religion* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 318.

²¹⁶ S. Sue Amyx, *Seeing the Possibilities: Christian Education Models in Blueprints for Building Christian Education*, Douglas D. Cripe ed. (St. Louis, Missouri: Christian Board of Publication, 1997), 6, 11.

²¹⁷ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Westminster: John Knox Press, 1989), 171 – 172.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 172 – 182.

institution.²¹⁹ Ideology is an overarching world view. Ideology is the way the institution actually functions. This has a direct correlation on how this shapes people's values and world views.

Ideology is a set of valued beliefs, whose role in education is the processing of knowledge, reproduction of that knowledge, and a reproduction of the social and cultural patterns of society. It provides the platform and the premises from which all decisions about life are made and from which all decisions about education matters are made. Ideology rationalizes how and what we teach.

Ideology is relevant to education because education shapes our world views, interpretations, and influences how we live together, socially, politically, and economically. We can find the ideology of an institution in its mission statement. These values provide the rationalization for the curriculum decisions and design.

“The ideology determines the pattern of thought and offers the rules of speech. It regulates the emotional values of everything and determines what is and what is not important.”²²⁰

This effects how particular aspects of the curriculum are presented in educational settings. It is important that the materials used provide access to information of all kinds.²²¹ That the scope of education is not limited to only what the ideology will allow.

Very often we are oblivious to the ideology of the educational setting we are in.

²¹⁹ Elliot w. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company, 1985), 47.

²²⁰ Johannes C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966), 62.

²²¹ Mary Boys, “Curriculum Thinking From A Roman Catholic Perspective”, *Religious Education*. Volume 75, Number 5. (September to October 1980), 521.

The most powerful ideologies are those that we are not aware of because they are part of our everyday, ordinary lives. This is dangerous because if we cannot see it, we cannot judge it or critique it. It is the curriculum designer's responsibility to uncover and critique ideologies in the curriculum especially those that are functional or operational ideologies because they are the most dangerous.

The curriculum designer must also be aware of the root metaphor embedded in the curriculum because this can also be largely unconscious on the part of the designer.²²² Metaphors have to do with the way a person perceives the world around them. Root metaphors guide moral practice in education.²²³ The root metaphor that is chosen is quite often based on how the curriculum designer views the mind of the student, how they view schools and places of learning and how they view teachers as instructors or as facilitators.²²⁴ I believe that the mind should be viewed as a sieve. In this way the student can take in all information but can discard what they may feel is not of importance to them.

There are the three curricula²²⁵ that all schools teach no matter if the setting is in a classroom, in the home, at church, etc. These are the explicit, the implicit or hidden, and

²²² Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, *Emerging Issues in Religious Education* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 43.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 167.

²²⁵ Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company, 1985), 85.

the null curriculum. The explicit curriculum is the advertised curriculum.²²⁶ In a religious context, it is embodied in our religious practices. There are three major sources for the explicit curriculum. The first source is the historical traditions that are embodied in our sacred texts, practices, creeds, stories, and writings. The educator's task is to facilitate engagement between the student's contemporary life with historical knowledge.²²⁷ The past is made available through stories, art, dance, music, biblical narrative, drama, the biographical, and the critical study of our sacred texts.

The second source in the explicit curriculum is the contemporary. Our own contemporary experiences must be trusted as holding wisdom. All wisdom is not in the past. The present adds to the heritage of knowledge. Nothing from our contemporary experiences should be excluded from our curriculum. The arts such as movies, music, paintings, T.V. can be used to stimulate dialogue involving the student's contemporary life and historical knowledge.

The third is visionary sources that can allow people to fashion and reshape themselves. It propels one toward emancipation and recreation, shaping and refashioning. Visionary content sources can facilitate dreaming and transformation.

The implicit curriculum's presence is never named or advertised.²²⁸ It is taught indirectly. Its presence is felt in the organizational structure in the educational

²²⁶ Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination*, 88.

²²⁷ Thomas H. Groome and Harold D. Horell, *Horizons and Hopes: The Future of Religious Education* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 27.

²²⁸ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 68 – 69.

environment, in the procedures that must be followed, in the processes that are installed. It is in the design, form, shape, and pattern of the worship or liturgical environment. It influences the church's symbols, metaphors, patterns of language and our image of God. The hidden curriculum influences the course of work to be completed and the selection of resources to be used.

The implicit curriculum determines the unspoken rules for participation that delineate how we dwell together.²²⁹ We become aware of who has the power and who does not. It influences the criteria for evaluation of the curriculum content and decision making for the selection of resources and materials.

The hidden curriculum operates with great force and influence because it is subtle.²³⁰ It is pervasive. The hidden curriculum includes disguised, covered over elements that become norms. We do not realize its power on us. Students are learning more than what is explicitly taught. If we carefully analyzed the hidden curriculum in our religious education programs, we may be able to uncover and reduce the negative effects it has on us.

The church's curriculum educates not only by virtue of what it explicitly teaches and by the hidden curriculum but also by what it neglects to teach. The null curriculum is the excluded curriculum. The null curriculum is what is taught by what is not taught. It is what is absent.

The null curriculum has two major components. First it delineates what is left out

²²⁹ Ellis C. Nelson, *Congregations: Their Power to Form and Transform* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1988), 246.

²³⁰ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 69 – 70.

and whose story is not told such as the experiences of the poor, of women, and of people of color. This curriculum ignores the experiences of “the other”. It is very dangerous because it denies the student options that should be open to them.

Secondly, there are processes that are left out. These processes deny the use of the creative imagination. This is the curriculum that cultivates ignorance. It is absent knowledge that has been systematically and purposely not developed. Ignorance is never neutral. Not having access to certain view points and lack of knowledge, is negative in the formation of our minds, our spirits and our lives. The selection of curriculum materials is profoundly affected by the null curriculum. The null curriculum excludes not only content but practices.

The null curriculum has to do with power. If you do not want people to know something, you simply do not teach it. The null curriculum effects our options because if we do not know that certain options exists then it limits what options we choose, the alternatives we might examine, and the perspectives we decide to accept. This has huge implications for what influences people’s minds. The absence of considerations can skew our interpretations. It is a system that dissects life and connects us with a world that has become rooted in fear. The null curriculum cultivates ignorance and absent knowledge. Ignorance is never neutral.²³¹ What we do not take in influences our consciences. It domesticates and censors our conscience. It presents a limited view and therefore forces people to accept blindly a particular way of thinking. What is in the curriculum and

²³¹ Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company, 1985), 98.

what is left out of the curriculum as well as what is silently taught is crucial for the shaping and reshaping of the hearts, minds, and spirits of the people that sit in the pews of our churches.

Curriculum should be many faceted.²³² It should use all means of learning including computers, the internet, movies, films, music and works of art which is only a small sampling of what can be used for our enlightenment. Schooling is an important vehicle toward education but it is not the only way to learn.²³³ Religious education should involve outreach. Service to others can be an important method of learning. Liturgy and worship are methods of learning. Labor and work are methods of enlightening people. Leisure is a method through which education can take place. In silence character can be shaped and skills can be formed. Everything the church does should be a way of teaching. God can show up in many forms.

Making a distinction between a curriculum of education and a curriculum of schooling, however, could enable us to break out of this limited and limiting meaning of curriculum. The distinction is actually quite simple. A curriculum of education will refer to the interplay of the several forms through which education occurs – it will refer to education in, to, and by service, community, proclamation, worship, and teaching. In contrast, a curriculum of schooling will be a reference to only one of the many valuable forms through which education occurs, that form will generally happen in a place called a school, a form focused on process of instruction, reading of texts, conceptual knowledge, and study.²³⁴

²³² Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 65 – 66.

²³³ Ibid, 64 – 66.

²³⁴ Ibid., 65.

We must refuse to limit the curriculum of religious education to text and schooling.²³⁵ A Christian church's religious instruction curriculum should not be indoctrinational but should be educational.²³⁶ We should see instruction through education. Curriculum should be fluid.²³⁷ It should not be set in stone. Participants should be allowed to critically reflect and share their thoughts with others. The curriculum should provide enough space and freedom that it will cause a transformation in the participants.

Education is all about the transformation of the person. Critical reflection is a catalyst for transformation. The events of September 11th were a “disorienting dilemma”²³⁸ for many of us. A crisis can be the first step to a personal transformation. Americans were forced to reevaluate our assumptions by engaging in critical reflection which is the second step in the process. The next step, which is engaging in reflective discourse with others, is important in order for the individual to validate their new perspective. The last step to transformation through critical reflection is for the individual to put their new learning into action.

Education should increase the learner's power in the world. The curriculum designs the educational environment. The teacher executes it. Curriculum design is the creating of an educational environment that allows the participants to recognize their own

²³⁵ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People*, 64 – 65.

²³⁶ Ibid., 64.

²³⁷ Ibid., 62.

²³⁸ Jack Mezirow, “Learning to Think Like an Adult: Transformational Theory: Core Concepts” in Jack Mezirow and Associates, ed. *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (San Francisco: Jossey – Bass, 2000), 89.

resources and use them to create their own narrative. It allows these new narratives to embody new life meanings and helps the participant on their way to wholeness.

Facilitator's Guide

The teaching ministry should be such that it changes the lives of the instructors²³⁹ and learners alike.²⁴⁰ Education in the church should be viewed as members of the church empowering one another. Learning should involve the learner actively educating themselves. This can take place through an instructor acting as facilitator and not as a lecturer in which the learner passively listens and accepts facts.

The facilitator should provide materials and ideas that will stimulate the learner to ask questions and to seek answers.²⁴¹ Whether facilitators use professionally prepared materials or if they prepare materials themselves, facilitators must make every effort to see that the materials will contribute to making the lesson come alive.

The facilitator should provide space and an atmosphere that is conducive for learning to take place.²⁴² The facilitator gently guides the student from the dependent passivity of observer to an independent active learner. Facilitators should be initially

²³⁹ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 117 – 118.

²⁴⁰ Nel Noddings, *Happiness and Education* (New York; University Press, 2003), 244.

²⁴¹ C. Ellis Nelson, *Congregations: Their Power to Form and Transform* (USA: John Knox, 1988), 258.

²⁴² Kieran Scott, "Is Adult Education Unique? " in *The Living Light: An Interdisciplinary Review of Catholic religious Education, Catechesis, and Youth and Pastoral Ministry*. (Washington, D. C.: Department of Education, United States Conference of Bishops, Fall, 2002), 80.

trained and training should continue throughout their career as facilitators.²⁴³

Appendix B contains a facilitator's guide that was created for the Riverside Church. It is a compilation of several guides including earlier facilitator's guides that was created by dedicated members of the Adult Christian Education Ministry of the Riverside Church. I updated and added to the guide which assists the facilitators in the planning of their sessions and addresses anthropological implications of facilitating a session with adult participants.

The guide includes a questionnaire that asks participants some general questions about their thoughts on God and other faith traditions. There is a questionnaire that attempts to ascertain participants learning styles and Christian education courses they may be interested in. And there is a course evaluation at the end of the guide.

This guide is meant to be used as a model for a guide that can be created for any Christian church. The guide and questionnaires should be adapted to the needs of the individual church.

²⁴³ Gloria H. Williams, Finding Builders to Build: Teacher Recruitment and Support in *Blueprints for Building Christian Education*, Douglas D. Cripe ed. (St. Louis, Missouri: Christian Board of Publication, 1997), 29 – 37.

Chapter 8

The Curriculum

An Introduction to Critical Interpretation

You must do your own independent investigation of truth... When you are courageous enough to examine and challenge those things that you have been taught to accept as truth, you cannot help but find the truth beneath their accepted meaning.²⁴⁴

Iyania Vanzant

Each individual should have the opportunity to interpret sacred text with the insight and wisdom that the Creator gives to the individual.²⁴⁵ There is no way of assessing the past in the raw form found in the original sacred texts. We cannot get back into the mind of the original writers of the texts. You can access the sacred texts only through the process of interpretation.

This will require patient and intelligent investigation. This method of study will result in explorers believing themselves knowledgeable enough of the ideas of the sacred

²⁴⁴ Iyania Vanzant, *One Day My Soul Just Opened Up* (New York: Fireside, 1980), 25.

²⁴⁵ Gabriel Moran, "Understanding Religion and Being Religious", Page 21. 249 – 252.

scriptures, cultures, and traditions to feel confident in their hermeneutics of the texts. The explorers will not only possess textual virtuosity, but also a sense of rapport, empathy, and resonance with the sacred scriptures and their spiritual ideas. I believe this to be an important component of “best practice” for multifaith education.

Critical Interpretation is the study of writings or artifacts for the purpose of making discerning and discriminating judgments about the writings or artifacts. When we are attempting to understand sacred texts or artifacts from faith traditions other than our own, critical interpretation can aid us in the making of inferences or drawing conclusions about the work through study and reflection. In sacred texts there are meanings that can overflow into contemporary interpretation. Certain tools can be used in order to assist in the study of the written word or the artifacts.

An artist, author, or creator of a body of work usually works within their own environment and creates in the space that is familiar to them. Therefore they bring to their work parts of themselves and their experiences. It is important to know certain things about the author or creator of the artifact in order to understand more fully what it is that they are trying to communicate to their audience. Scientist, which includes critical interpreters, has devised certain tools that can help an investigator accomplish this job more thoroughly.²⁴⁶ These tools are referred to as criticisms, of which there are several that can be used in order to analyze a body of work. Each of these criticisms uses specific methodologies.

²⁴⁶ Michael Nazir – Ali, “Muslims and Christians Reading Scripture: When, Where, How, With Whom?” in *Scriptures in Dialogue: Christians and Muslims Studying the Bible and Qur’an Together*, ed. Michael Ipgrave, (U.K.: Church House Publishing, 2004), 1 – 24.

Many times artifacts are validated by physical evidence that had been found during archaeological explorations. Textual criticism refers to the examination and analysis of a body of writing or an artifact in order to trace its history. A piece of work can be compared with other artifacts in order to establish if it is an authentic manuscript or artifact.

Source criticism involves searching for the original sources that are behind a given body of work. It tries to determine where the author got their information and if the source was a written work or an oral tradition. Using this investigation certain hypothesis about where a piece of work originated from can be made.

Form criticism determines the genre of the work. If it is a written work, it may be a poem, a narrative, or another literary genre. If it is another type of artifact, it may be a work that is associated with war, or birth and death, or spirituality for example. Form criticism asks the questions of where this piece of work could have been created and in what manner it could have been used.

In addition to the criticisms mentioned above there are also redaction criticism, narrative criticism, socio - scientific criticism, and canonical criticism to name a few. Using the methodologies of criticisms is like putting on a new set of lenses in order to see things that you could not see before.²⁴⁷

Critical interpretation is a practice of hermeneutics. The investigation of appropriate evidence is made more viable with the use of hermeneutical tools.

²⁴⁷ Kieran Scott, "Is Adult Education Unique? " in *The Living Light: An Interdisciplinary Review of Catholic religious Education, Catechesis, and Youth and Pastoral Ministry*. (Washington, D. C.: Department of Education, United States Conference of Bishops, Fall, 2002), 81.

Hermeneutics is a method and a process that is used in critical thinking. It is the science and art of interpretation.²⁴⁸ It is considered a science because it follows rules that can be classified into an orderly system. Hermeneutics is considered an art because it involves communication. Communication is flexible. Mechanical and ridged rules applied to communication can at times distort the true meaning of what is being communicated.

Hermeneutics is a conscience reflection on how a piece of work has been interpreted and who did the interpretation.²⁴⁹ It is often employed in the interpretation of sacred texts and uses the principles of Biblical exegesis. Hermeneutics involves cultivating the ability to understand things from somebody else's point of view, and to appreciate the cultural and social forces that may have influenced their outlook. Hermeneutics is recognizing what in the text or artifact engages us and what does not engage us. A student/investigator should learn how to exegete a text by using social, cultural, historical, and linguistic evidence to uncover the true meaning of the sacred literature.

There are certain skills that are required to be used when critically thinking. The first is the ability to detect bias and identify unstated assumptions.²⁵⁰ When we engage critical interpretation we must endeavor to understand someone else's point of view. This means that we must take into account the other's cultural and social background as

²⁴⁸ Claudia V. Camp, "Feminist Theological Hermeneutics: Canon and Christian Identity" in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl, (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 53 – 67.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 53 – 69.

²⁵⁰ Richard Penaskovic *Critical Thinking and the Academic Study of Religion* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 6 - 19.

well as our own.

Each of us brings the baggage of our experiences to our theological assumptions.²⁵¹ This includes our personal history, our biblical studies background, as well as our sociology, politics, religion, linguistics, gender, nationalities and other elements that make up our personality. In the process of critical thinking we should ask ourselves certain questions such as ‘What do I know?’, ‘How do I know what I know?’, and ‘What is the evidence for my assumptions?’²⁵² We must actively think for ourselves. We must determine the reliability of the source of the text, writing, or artifact. We must evaluate arguments and evidence and explore carefully before making any decisions. We must carefully organize our ideas in order to communicate effectively. We must be open to new ideas and make sound judgments.²⁵³

Critical interpretation helps us to determine the reliability of the source of the text, writing, or artifact. It helps us to evaluate the arguments made by and the evidence offered by the author. We must think about the way we reflect on a text or artifact by using strategies that will help us observe our effectiveness concerning our reflection and taking corrective measures if necessary.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*. (One World, 2002), 1 - 113.

²⁵² Richard Penaskovic, *Critical Thinking and the Academic Study of Religion* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 6 – 19.

²⁵³ Kieran Scott, “Continuity and change in Religious Education: Building on the Past, Re – Imagining the Future” in Oliver Brennan, ed. *Critical Issues in Religious Education* (USA: Veritas Press, 2005), 95.

²⁵⁴ Richard Penaskovic, *Critical thinking and the Academic Study of Religion* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 6 – 19.

We must be aware of how we preview others. To this end, there is a six session lesson plan entitled “Introduction to Critical Interpretation” that can be found in Appendix D. It begins with “A Self – Inventory” to help uncover what in our personal histories may cause us to harbor misinformation and biases about members of other faith traditions. This inventory was adapted from one created by Dr. Lucinda Mosher.²⁵⁵ There is space for personal reflection and an evaluation at the end of the six sessions. The closing prayers can be said by the facilitator or preferably by one of the explorers.

²⁵⁵ Dr. Lucinda Allen Mosher, Faculty Associate for Interfaith Studies, Hartford Seminary; lmosher@hartsem.edu.

Some Notes on Judaism

“I am convinced that interfaith conversation is essential if we are to break down the prejudices that have kept synagogue and church in enmity, or at best tolerance, for the past two millennia.”

Amy – Jill Levin

Jonathan Magonet asks “What does Jewish traditions have to offer to contemporary issues in a multifaith, multicultural society?”²⁵⁶ This curriculum and Bible Walk attempts to answer this question.

Judaism is centered on a covenantal relationship between the Jewish nation and God. A person is considered Jewish if their mother is Jewish. Many have converted to Judaism but most are born into the faith. Judaism is a tribal religion. It is passed down from generation to generation. The largest Jewish communities are in the United States and in Israel.

Judaism is believed to have begun with a covenant between God and Abraham around 2000 BCE. Abraham is known to be the Patriarch of three monotheistic faiths – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Judaism adheres to many religious principles but the most important of these principles is the belief in One God that is omniscient, omnipotent, benevolent, and merciful. Jews believe that they are God’s chosen people.

Judaism is one of the oldest faith traditions that are still being practiced today.

²⁵⁶ Jonathan Magonet, *Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 23 – 34.

Judaism is centered on the Torah. The word “Torah” is translated “law” or “teaching”. The Torah is the book of God’s law. The Torah consists of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible-Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Judaism is steeped in history. Much of Jewish history was embroiled in conflict. Archaeology allows us to approach the ancient Hebrew message with the help of the manifold tools of modern research. Through archaeology, Hebrew biblical records and artifacts can be verified. Archaeology can bring a different light to complex issues. Having a basic understanding of Judaism will enable Christians to have a better understanding of Christ and the world in which He lived.²⁵⁷ First century Israel, the culture, and the people impacted the message of this itinerant preacher.

The curriculum for *Bible Walk: A Journey from the Riverside Church to Ancient Israel* was written in conjunction with the itinerary for a congregational trip to the Holy Land. The curriculum concentrated on the archaeology and the history of Israel. We then reflected on the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures in light of the history and cultural background.

The end result was that explorers were able to better understand the significance of the holy sites to which the Biblical message was referring. Basic geographical, archaeological, historical, political, and cultural data as well as biblical concepts were explored for each site. This experience proved to be spiritually uplifting and to bring a deeper understanding of Jesus’ ministry.

Appendix E contains, in PowerPoint format, the 19 session lesson plan that was

²⁵⁷ Amy – Jill Levin, *The Misunderstood Jew: the Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 1-16.

specifically designed for the Riverside Church *Bible Walk* trip to Israel. The sessions are not numbered. The sessions are written so that a facilitator can use them in the manner that best fits their needs. Sessions can be subdivided in order to accommodate time restraints. There is a timing breakdown of the sessions in Appendix F. The twentieth and last session was a pre-trip celebration. Details of the curriculum will be made available exclusively to those that purchase this tool.

Chapter 9

Transformation

If you only know one religion, you don't know any.
There will be no world peace until there is peace among the
world's religions.

Hans Kung

The facilitator designs the learning environment. The environment should give the explorers a sense of beauty, balance and harmony. Communities of faith must make it possible for their members to visit the sacred spaces and houses of worship of other faith traditions.

There are the non-schooling forms of education that takes place every day and everywhere. The Christian education curriculum must not be limited to books and desks in a classroom. Christian education should be the designing of multiple educational environments where the explorer can experience life and living.²⁵⁸ School is only one form of religious education. Work is a form of education. Leisure is a form of education. Maria Harris informs us that there is a tradition in the church for the transmitting of

²⁵⁸ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 49 – 50.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 43.

knowledge.

...the church's educational ministry has been embodied and lived in five classical forms: didache, koinonia, kerygma, diakonia, and leiturgia. If we would educate to all of these forms, as well as *through* all of them, then attending only to any one of them – didache (schooling or teaching/instruction), or for that matter leiturgia (worship and prayer) – simply will not do.²⁵⁹

A multifaith educational plan should include multicultural and multifaith celebrations which would include food, music, artifacts, articles of clothing, and guest speakers, especially senior citizens that can share their experiences.²⁶⁰

It is up to the facilitator to encourage the students to use the metaphor of journeying and to share their experiences.²⁶¹ Such experiences are often the forerunner to wisdom. The student is exploring, searching, questioning. Education leads people out of themselves toward transformation.²⁶² Learning is a lifelong process.

Facilitators must be sensitive to the needs of their students. It is important that a facilitator listens well and brings their presence and caring to the educational environment. Presence is a result of mindfulness. Here the facilitator is capable of listening to not only what the student is saying verbally but to the non – verbal communication. The caring facilitator will find ways of relating the content of their lessons to the needs and interest of the students.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 43.

²⁶⁰ Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Jewish – Christian Services: Babel or Mixed Multitude?" *Cross Currents*. (Spring 1990), 23.

²⁶¹ Maria Harris, *Fashion me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 173.

²⁶² Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (New York: MacMillan collage Publishing Company, 1985), 21.

We must not be fooled into thinking that teaching in the church only involves children in Sunday School. Christian education is for all ages. Everyone can be a teacher and everyone can be a learner. Teaching and learning is a lifelong endeavor for individuals as well as the Church.²⁶³ A facilitator will provide materials and ideas that will stimulate the learner to ask questions and to seek answers. Teachers are to help lift souls up.

Facilitators should endeavor to bring the soul of the people and the sacred face to face in Christian education.²⁶⁴ Spiritual issues should be approached in a non - dogmatic manner. Teaching must take place in a way that it is not merely telling people what you want them to know, but through the entire spectrum of teaching activities. These include knowing, thinking, believing, and learning, judging, explaining, defining, wondering, and demonstrating.

Education does not always have to involve books, pens, paper, and lecturing. Maria Harris informs us that learning through “koinonia”²⁶⁵ can be accomplished through engaging in community work and in communion with others. Learning through “leiturgia”²⁶⁶ can be accomplished through engaging in prayer and worship. Teaching and learning through “kerygma”²⁶⁷ can be accomplished through the proclaimed word of

²⁶³ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 45 – 47.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 102 – 103.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 75 – 93.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 94 – 109.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 127 – 143.

God. Learning can take place through “diakonia”²⁶⁸; engagement in service and outreach to others.

This is the Messianic shalom in its abundant multiplicity.

1. This shalom is *proclaimed*.In the kerygma, that shalom is represented in the literal sense, it is made present.
2. This shalom is *lived*....It is lived in koinonia....Only insofar as men are partakers of the shalom, represented in the kerygma, do they live in mutual communion and fellowship.
3.This shalom is *demonstrated* in humble service, diakonia.²⁶⁹

Of course we should continue to use the traditional method of “didache”²⁷⁰ to transmit knowledge. It is important that we use the most appropriate forms of teaching and learning that is available. I believe that we must keep current in our field of Christian education methods in order to give our explorers the best possible education.

Harris reminds us that our attitude should not be that the church has an education program but that the church itself is an environment of learning. When a minister is preaching, teaching is going on. During the worship service, teaching is going on. When Christians are evangelizing, teaching is going on. It is outreach and worship, it is liturgy and service. It is everything that the church does. It is the total substance and processes of the church life.

Teaching is an activity that human beings do for one another. However, the various gifts of church members are necessary for a successful Christian Education

²⁶⁸ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 144 – 163.

²⁶⁹ Johannes C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966), 25.

²⁷⁰ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 110 – 126.

program. The whole church must be involved in the educating of church members.²⁷¹

When different members pool their knowledge and resources in order to bring information to the membership everyone is a winner. Furthermore, when everyone is responsible for the education of the congregation each will bring with them their special gifts.

We do not all learn the same. Neither do we all teach the same. Variety in teaching styles is necessary in order to address varieties in learning styles.²⁷² The curriculum is executed by the teacher. However, all teachers bring their own ideologies, religious, political and cultural beliefs into the classroom with them. As long as the teacher remains in the boundaries of the curriculum it may be possible for him or her to exert some freedom concerning sharing their own thoughts with their students.

Just like a preacher, the teacher must have a manuscript. The preacher's is the sermon. The teacher's is the lesson plan. Both should be moved by the spirit.²⁷³ Curriculum restricts what is taught. The teacher can liberate the student by the method in which he or she teaches.

An explorer's perspective begins to change when they meet other human beings with different world views.

“These three elements – discernment, engagement with the classic texts, and conversion – are essential to any discussion

²⁷¹ Jane E. Regan, *Toward An Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 11.

²⁷² Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 118 – 122.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 16.

of transformation within the context of Christian faith ...”²⁷⁴

Explorers should come to the realization that they cannot interpret other religions through stereotypic lenses. When we come face to face with others it deepens and changes our understanding of the “other”.

²⁷⁴ Jane E. Regan, *Toward An Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 98.

Chapter 10

Epilogue

My call for a spiritual revolution is not a call for a religious revolution. Nor is it a reference to a way of life that is somehow otherworldly, still less to something magical or mysterious. Rather it is a call for a radical reorientation away from our habitual preoccupation with self. It is a call to turn toward the wider community of beings with whom we are connected, and for conduct which recognizes others' interests alongside our own.²⁷⁵

Tenzin Gyatso His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

Curriculum design is the structuring and fashioning of an educational environment in such a way as to allow people to get in touch with their own resources, their own narratives, and the resources of others around them.²⁷⁶ Written in blue are the thoughts of some of the participants and stakeholders.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Bible Walk was a blessing that continues to nourish my spirit.

²⁷⁵ Tenzin Gyatso His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Ethics for the New Millennium: Getting to the Heart of Interfaith* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 155.

²⁷⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 19.

It was a blessing to walk by the Sea of Galilee where Jesus began his ministry of healing and teaching. We enjoyed a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee in the "Jesus Boat".

A blessing to pray at the Western Wall

A blessing in Bethlehem at the Church of the Nativity

A blessing to pray in the Church of Loaves and the Fishes in Tabgha (the Feeding the Four Thousand Site) where Jesus asks his disciples, "How many loaves do you have? Matthew 15:32

A blessing to sit in the Garden of Gethsemane where we had our morning prayer/communion service.

Two memorable moments occurred when we were together "in community"

At the sunny baptismal site on the River Jordan where the candidates were dressed in wet gowns, their faces glowing. Benediction. Quietness, then as we all turned to leave the water area--Suddenly out of nowhere..... we heard an angelic voice (the Spirit was in our midst!) The song was Edward Bonnemore's "The Baptismal Song". (We were surprised to discover that the voice was from our own pilgrim Mary Jenkins!

Dr. Thomas ended our last service by thanking everyone for their participation in Bible Walk. After we made personal statements about, He read the scripture. His closing words to us were: "Do what the disciples did--go back and share!"

Today I am counting my many blessings!
Hallelujah. Amen.

Shalom!

Shalom!

Rose Ella Ferguson

The people of the world are in the midst of a transformation.²⁷⁷ There is a developing of a new consciousness. In order to change our thoughts and behaviors, it is necessary to focus our attention on what we want to change.

“Attention is the power of transformation.”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2003), 10.

²⁷⁸ This was said by Dr. Ravi Ravindra -physicist and spiritual guide on the PBS's Global Spirit.

Transformative learning is learning that produces a change in the behavior and the belief systems of a learner.²⁷⁹ This change can take place over a period of time. It can also come about suddenly as when an individual sustains a crisis in their life. The crisis can act as a catalyst for change.

A person's perspectives are given meaning through the principles that they use to interpret the realities of the world. Children are taught these principles from parents, teachers, and others. The Bible is a living document and therefore, can provide meaning for our lives today.

Time cannot be grasped as a visual object in which past, present and future are points along a line. A fuller human experience of time knows that we live in a present whose boundaries are never clear. We can live superficially in the present with little regard for the past or future. Or we can live profoundly in the present, touching the past with memory, aware of other beings in the present, and knowing that the future depends partially on our present actions.²⁸⁰

There should be a relationship between the explorer's contemporary life and the historical wisdom provided by the Scriptures. It is the task of the facilitator to see to it that this relationship comes about. The facilitator should provide visionary resources that can lead the explorer towards freedom, shaping, and a refashioning of their lives. The curriculum must allow for enough space in order for the participants to transcend their present lives to a new level of freedom through knowledge.

Transformative learning takes place when individuals engage in reflective thought

²⁷⁹ Sharon B. Merriam, *The New Update on Adult Learning Theory* (San Francisco: Jossey – Bass Publishers, 2001), 16.

²⁸⁰ Gabriel Moran, "Revelation as Teaching – Learning" APRRE. Proceedings, 1999.

processes.²⁸¹ They may begin to question what they have always believed. At some point they realize that what they thought was a truth may not be consistent with their experiences.²⁸² It is at this junction that learning takes place in such a way that it opens up new meanings in life. This is the transformation of the person's way of being in the world. There is a developing maturation in our Christian faith.

Journal: My Trip to the Holy Land

Ronald B. Lonesome

July, 2012

Wed. 7/11/12 5:15 p.m.

We are over Canada heading to the Atlantic Ocean, and on to Tel Aviv. We are expected to arrive in about 9 hours, (9 a.m. on Thursday, in Israel time).

I am very excited. I feel very blessed to be able to make this pilgrimage. I would not have made this journey on my own. I am thankful to the planners at TRC.

Thur. 7/12/12

We have arrived at Ben Gurion Airport. It is about 9 a.m. It was a very long flight, though we made good time, about 9 and 1/2 hours. My feet are swollen. I was seated between a Palestinian woman who now lives in Washington, D.C. and an Israeli man, who now lives in Toronto, Canada. We discussed my trip to Israel, Riverside Church activities, and the current political situation in Israel and in the West Bank. I invited the woman to attend the Palestine Israeli Conference scheduled for the fall, at Riverside. We exchanged cards. She suggested that our group should visit Ramallah or other Palestinian towns during our visit.

Fri. 7/13/12

This morning I awoke in Jerusalem! I feel so blessed to be on this journey. I feel comfortable with my fellow travelers and with my roommate.

²⁸¹ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 172 – 173.

²⁸² Jane E. Regan, "Renewing the Prophetic Voice :Insights from Adult Education Theory" APRRE Annual Meeting Proceedings, 1997.

Today, we are in the Judean Desert. It is over 105 degrees. The visit to the Dead Sea was fascinating. Your body actually floats very easily. The water is very viscous, or heavy, as you walk through it. I applied the mud to cover my entire body, except my face. It is supposed to be relaxing and healing. I felt wonderful and renewed. I also jumped into the sulfur pool, as well. I forget what that was supposed to do, but I feel open to all these new experiences.

Later, we traveled to Masada. It was a fascinating fortress built by Herod the Great. It includes the remains of two different palaces that he had built for himself. As part of the Jewish revolts, Masada was the last stand for these zealots in their opposing the Roman legions. The defenders had a source of water and stored food. They had enough to survive for years. I was well prepared for these visits by our classes in church. I was able to better understand the significance of these places.

Sat. 7/14/12

This morning we went to the Jordan River. Dr. Thomas explained that if we have already been baptized in the past, we can still have a ceremonial rededication of our baptism. I chose to have the complete immersion. There were nearly 30 of us being baptized in the Jordan. I need to be open to the deeper significance of this event. It is dramatic and entertaining to be in the River where John the Baptist baptized Jesus. But, the deeper issue for me is recommitting myself to my faith and to God. Dr. Thomas reminded us that this could be done anywhere, and needs to be reaffirmed regularly by each of us in our daily lives. The Jordan River is rather small, not very wide, but, "Oh, so special".

In the late afternoon, we all boarded "The Jesus Boat" and cruised along the Sea of Galilee. It is a very wide fresh water lake. From our classes, we were aware of the rich history of this body of water in the life of Jesus. It was a sunny and clear afternoon, but there was a strong breeze and we needed to balance ourselves to stand up in the moving boat. Rev. Thomas gave a Bible reading and a meditation about the bounty of this sea, but also the power of the water in times of storm. It was here that Jesus calmed the sea and reminded his disciples about the importance of faith. I was very moved by the beauty and the history of this sea. We also got some wonderful photos.

Sun. 7/15/12

We awoke in our hotel just off the coast of the Sea of Galilee. The hotel has been great. The food selection is good and so many "yummy" desserts. The hotel is connected to a local kibbutz. It is very hot and steamy when we leave the AC in our rooms.

Today, we went to the Golan Heights. I am aware of the controversy about Israel's decision to annex this site, which Syria wants returned, after losing it in the 1967 Six day War. There are communities and farms at the lower levels, but much of the heights are open unoccupied land.

It was clear how strategic this site is. It was used to shell Israeli lands before the 1967

war. There are sculptures and signs relating to the military history of this site all over the Heights. The view is breathtaking. Our tour guide pointed to Syria, where he said we were about 15 miles from the current fighting. He also pointed out the “green line”. The land that is in the hands of Israel is green with vegetation and farms and trees. The land of the Arabs is mostly barren. He reviewed the many water conserving and land reclaiming efforts of Israel, which have resulted in the “blooming of the desert.”

Mon. 7/16/12

This morning, each of us had a chance to plant a tree. There is an ongoing commitment to create forests where there was dry barren land in the past. I planted an oak tree. We each received a certificate for this planting. Israel claims to have planted over 240 million trees in the last 109 years!

We arrived in Haifa this evening. It is a very urban and hilly city. It is a major port city with an important history for the movement of oil and other resources and products. The views from the hills are fantastic. I am learning so much about this historic city. There is a mix of different religious communities living here. The Bahia faith has a major headquarters and memorial site here. The steps and the gardens and the domed building are magnificent. Parts of the site are restricted to members of the faith. They are one of the fastest growing religions in the world, we were told. They originated in Iran over a hundred years ago or longer. They grew out of Islam, but have modified to include Christian, Buddhist, and Jewish ideas as well. They have been persecuted, but have been welcomed in Israel and are free to practice their faith here. As we walked outside of the gates to this beautiful site we encountered a brown skinned guard. When we spoke, it turned out that he was from New Jersey. He was born in U.S. as a Bahia since both his parents were of that faith. He now lives and works in Haifa. He was very friendly and informative.

Tues. 7/17/12

We spent our second night in Haifa. We explored the Tel Megiddo. As I understand it, the word “tel” refers to a human made hill, which represents one generation or culture building upon the ruins of an earlier one. We were able to see the hard work of excavating through layers and layers of ancient settlements. We also saw the childhood home of Jesus, Nazareth. This is all in Northern Israel.

Wed. 7/18/12

This was a very full day. We have headed back to Jerusalem. For me, the high point was the visit to the Ethiopian Absorption Center. We had a chance to hear from a young man who was born a Jew in Ethiopia. He was brought to Israel at the age of 6. His father was the person who wrote letter to officials in Israel asking for the Israeli government to help evacuate the Ethiopian Jews who were facing danger and persecution from the communist government in Ethiopia in the late 1970's. Israel, with help from American

military, evacuated thousands of Ethiopian Jews. We learned about their long history as Jews. They never followed the Rabbinic based practices that other Jews developed after the destruction of the second temple. This young man has learned Hebrew, English and has graduated from college. He soon will be married. He has seen some problems of racism in Israel based on skin color. He even helped lead some protests. He sees some progress. Back in 2001 he left Israel for time and lived in Harlem. He even got a tattoo of a black panther on his arm. He was seeking some other parts of his identity. By interesting irony, he was in NYC for 9/11. In fact he had been at an Israeli owned club on the 107th floor of the WTC, a few days earlier. After that, he decided to return to Israel. He is a member of the reserves in Israeli Defense Force, as are most young males, and many females.

We were able to see young Ethiopian Jews who are second generation, and who are doing better with school and jobs and integrating into a very different society from that of their parents. I was nearly brought to tears hearing these stories of a modern day Exodus. In the evening, we attended a sound and light show which depicted the history of Jerusalem. There was no text, so we looked at images to follow the long history of this land. All those classes we took helped me to recognize the different events from Joshua crossing the Jordan, the early Kingdoms of Saul, David, and Solomon. We saw the destruction of the first temple, the return and construction of the second temple etc. This show was shown on the walls of the city, a citadel, now called the Tower of David.

Thur. 7/19/12

We were not able to visit the Temple Mount, our guide informed us. Apparently, there is some “tension.” It is also the first day of Ramadan, and there is less willingness to have large groups of non Muslims, today, as I understand it. I hope we will have a chance later, to visit.

We went to the famous Western Wall. It is the remains of the walls around the city, but not actually of the second temple. Part of it is known as the Wailing Wall. I put my hand on the wall and said a prayer for peace among God’s many peoples.

We had a very strenuous walk through long uneven, narrow tunnels, and passageways beneath the wall and the ancient city. This journey is not only sightseeing and prayerful pilgrimage, but also an endurance test. I will continue one step at a time, and pray for God’s guidance and strength.

In the afternoon, we went into the Palestinian section in order to visit Bethlehem. We had a different guide, a Palestinian Christian. We also took pictures with the friendly Palestinian guards or militia. The Palestinian flag was on display.

There was a beautiful chapel dedicated to the shepherds who saw the star and went to see the new baby Jesus. The chapel has the appearance of a tent such as the shepherds would have used. There is another church, where they indicate a spot they believe Jesus was born. The guide said it is a traditional belief, but the story and the person is more important than the structure or any assumed spot. Rev. Thomas reminded us that it is our

relationship with God that is the central issue, and that is not dependent on any symbols or sites etc.

We were told that they have nearly 5000 visitors in Bethlehem everyday! They are building several new hotels. I guess there will be room in the inn. As usual, we responded to the many local folks who depend on selling products to the visitors.

Fri. 7/20/12

This morning we visited Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum. This was a chilling and very moving experience. I was aware of some inner resistance to having this experience. I appreciate the terrible destruction and unspeakable pain and tragedy of the Holocaust. Yet, these events and the suffering seem to have been used to justify many present day political and military decisions. It is also hard not to compare the suffering of so many other groups over the centuries, including Africans and the Atlantic slave trade, and the years of Jim Crow and domestic terror African Americans lived through, etc. However, walking through these halls made my mind focus on the immediate experience of these terrible events. I appreciate the detailed documentation that has been pulled together.

Afterward, we had time to read our Bible and hear Rev. Thomas and others share their reflections. I raised the rhetorical question: "Where was God when all these terrible events were happening?" Where is God in all times of human suffering and injustice? There were several responses offered. I assume we each have to seek to find answers that work for us.

I was struck by the courage of the survivors. I focused on the expression on the face of a very young child who was photographed at the time of rescue from the camps. He was hiding under a table. He was staring at the camera with fear and questioning. We were told in the exhibit that this young boy was brought to Israel and later in life became the Chief Rabbi of Israel.

This all made me think that faith and courage are beyond any simple intellectual or logical analysis.

In the evening, which was Shabbat, we attended a service in a Conservative Synagogue. It was a special experience, especially after the earlier visit to the Holocaust Museum. We were served a wonderful meal, and a service of wine (or grape juice) and bread was also shared.

One of the Rabbi's, or members, told me that he was concerned that Americans do not get unbiased news reporting about Israel. He felt that the news does not report the positive things in Israel, and the cooperation that does occur between Jews and Arabs and other people in the area. I responded that in New York, I am concerned that the news is too biased toward the views of Israel. I said there is very weak criticism and very little questioning of the actions of Israel in our mainstream press. We left it at that.

Transcendence is a liberating process that can come about through teaching. Teaching can liberate by structuring limits and by stimulating people's awareness of these barriers. Therefore, these limits can be broken.

There must, however, be some restraints. Without limits we could not enjoy freedom. Education can bring us to new limits which can translate to deeper and further barriers that stretch our horizons. This process can help a person break the limits - not by them not having limits at all - but by the person's awareness of the limits that exists in their life. It is necessary for a person to know what values they are operating under because without that knowledge the person will be unable to change the values that are controlling their thinking.

Liberating religious education can arrest subliminal socialization. Education is toward freedom. We must be aware of and appreciate the views of the liberation theologian, the feminist theologian, and the womanist theologian as well as other cultural views.

Knowledge is power.²⁸³ The past is conserved in the curriculum of what people will use to launch themselves into a new place or to stay where they are. The insertion of the human element into the educational environment comes about through teaching an unrestricted curriculum. Teaching has the power to free the student from their dominant barriers that shackle their lives.

Education is a lifelong process that may be made up of short term goals.²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 48 – 49.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 38 – 39.

Education does not come to a certain point and then ends. Education continues throughout the life of a human being.

Through education, a person's everyday life is reshaped and refashioned. Education helps a person to recognize that the truth that they may have learned today may change tomorrow. Education resist learning that is fixed and does not change or evolve.

“Did the classes make an difference or impact on my trip ?
Well first thing that comes to mind is " how much of a difference did the classes make ? Because I truly believe they made a lot of difference. Especially the excellence way the format was laid out by our teachers. Both did a wonderful job. ..

After the trip was over I still feel the efforts of our studies together. The hand outs and booklets we received did help, but those things were nothing like the personal touch of a knowledgeable teacher...”

Saundra

What makes education Christian?

Christian education is a process. Christian education can be inter - religious and still not negate the specifications of the explorer's own religion.²⁸⁵ What is important is the designing of educational forms in order to transform.²⁸⁶ Transformation keeps life open to more. It helps the individual to find richer meaning and deeper truths in their search for the Holy.

²⁸⁵ Amy – Jill Levin, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 1 – 16.

²⁸⁶ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 38 – 39.

...Jesus' story reached its climax on Calvary and with the empty tomb, that we can say: here is the light of the world. The Creator has done what he promised. From now on we are living in the new age, the already – begun new world. The light is now shining in the dark ness, and the dark ness has not overcome it.²⁸⁷

The truth that you believe is never concrete, or infallible. Education resists the absolute. There is a resistance to closure. This same unity of the Spirit is essential for the continued existence of the church. The gifts of faith, hope, and love are necessary in order for believers to be good citizens of the New Age church.

Christian education reminds the individual that we do not own anything including ourselves. Life is a gift. When we understand that these gifts are to be used to serve others we now can use them in the correct manner.

“Our task is now to build the house, to tend the garden, to play the score.”²⁸⁸

Now that there has been an exposure to the “other” there should be an appreciation of the diverse. Explorers are more equipped to engage in profound interpersonal relationships. Instead of pushing anyone out, everyone is brought in. Explorers experience the interconnectedness of themselves with others. Technology has afforded us a global network and with it we are developing a global spiritual community. God show's Themselves in the face of “the other”.

Churches offer specific spiritual rituals that can be profoundly influential in forming personal and communal identities. Reflective prayer can be invaluable in developing wisdom and discernment. The formation of skills can take place in rest. Being silent can

²⁸⁷ Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 178.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 185.

be profoundly educational. Silence can be spiritually formative.²⁸⁹ We all want to make the journey back home to our Source. God is the end of this journey, the abiding presence in every step of the journey.

The trip was truly amazing and I have to say that everyone who participated came back truly changed and for many, it actually changed their life. Many were full of the spirit and some even overflowing. The trip has given each and every one of us a lasting impression and experience that could never be repeated. The people over in Israel were simply amazing and very hospitable and went out of their way to assure we were enjoying each and every moment. We felt very secure and safe and it was almost like a feeling of familiarity, kind of like we had been there before. It was very inviting and exciting. Many of us came back with a unique story, one which was shared with the Riverside family during Bible Walk Talk Back. Many were so moved 'til we had well over 60 people who wanted to sign up and go on the next trip. I pray that through the will of GOD we are able to provide a trip very soon for those who thirst so much to go, those who want to draw more closer to GOD and the Word of God.

Sincerely,

Laura Harris
Executive Director, Bible Walk

As Christian educators, I believe it is our mandate from God to teach others how to locate and use knowledge that has been lost to us. Through transformational leadership, our goal should be to assist others in revolutionary ideas to change the way people live their lives.²⁹⁰ One of the goals of religious educators should be to focus the

²⁸⁹ John P. Miller, *Education and the Soul: Toward A Spiritual Curriculum* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 151 – 153.

²⁹⁰ Robert E. Reber and D. Bruce Roberts, *A Lifelong Call to Learn: Approaches to Continuing Education for Church Leaders* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 67 - 68.

energy of God's people so that they can become more spiritual beings and "children of light".

The journey gets broader and deeper simultaneously. The explorer engages their primal longing for God. Their relationship with God is changing, becoming more personal and richer. Another veil that separated them from God is torn down. Their own faith traditions are expanding and becoming more meaningful.²⁹¹ They can appreciate the diverse instead of fearing it. This is called faith development.

How a person conceives and speaks about God will be a clear indication of how that person will live with and treat other people. In accordance with the concept of community in African culture and African consciousness²⁹², the three person Godhead can be thought of as a community of Gods. This community of Gods is one entity.²⁹³ Each member possesses the divine force that is God.²⁹⁴ Each personality of the one entity has the same nature and power. Therefore, one member of the Trinity is not ontologically subordinate to any other member of the Trinity.²⁹⁵ This community transcends distance from one another. Time restraints among them do not exist.

²⁹¹ Amir Hussain, *Oil and Water: Two Faiths: One God* (Copperhouse, 2006) 10 – 15.

²⁹² Okechukwu A. Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity* (New York: Paragon House, 1994).

²⁹³ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 78 – 79.

²⁹⁴ Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1983), 88 - 92.

²⁹⁵ Kissis K. Merahi, *The Contribution of the Orthodox Tewahedo Church to the Ethiopian Civilization* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: no publisher mentioned, 1999).

There is a spirit of communion in communities where similarities and differences peacefully coexist. There is acceptance and inclusiveness extended to all. The Creator, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are ontologically equal.²⁹⁶ Yet, each is distinctive in their personalities and their functions.²⁹⁷

As stated above, a person's conception of God will color how they treat others. Jesus treated others with a sense of community.

“...the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ, groans within us, so that the achievement of the cross might be implemented afresh at the place of pain, so that the music of the cross might be softly sung at that place of pain...”²⁹⁸

He treated people with respect. After healing a person he did not make them feel that they owed Him an allegiance or that they had to be dependent on Him. After helping a person Christ would tell them to go on their way. Christ was a liberator. He freed people from bondage on many levels. The resurrection of Christ empowers us all. We know that through His resurrection we can overcome anything.

“...our task is to implement his (Christ's) unique achievement. We are like the musicians called to play and sing the unique and once – only – written score. We don't have to write it again, but we have to play it.”²⁹⁹

“The Bible Walk sessions helped me to understand the trip we took to Israel in July, 2013. I was there for all those Bible Walk classes so earnestly and thoughtfully

²⁹⁶ Kissis K. Merahi, *The Contribution of the Orthodox Tewahedo Church to the Ethiopian Civilization* (Addis, Ababa, Ethiopia: No publisher mentioned, 1999).

²⁹⁷ Stanley M. Burgess, *Eastern Christian Traditions: The Holy Spirit* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 1, 2, 6.

²⁹⁸ Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 190.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 182.

prepared by Laura, Anesta,... I was there from January to July 8 (the very last Sunday before our departure.)

So I understand that the trip would indeed be intense. Long days. Walking. Climbing. Hiking. Thinking. Studying. And I also knew that we would be well – cared for during this arduous and fulfilling journey.

I understand that we would be probing our spiritual roots in depth, that we would be immersed in Judaism and Judaica. These are our roots.

I understand this trip. These Bible Walk sessions helped to prepare me, even as the disciples had been prepared to go out into the world. The voice and presence of the Christ was in the preparation process.

I understood that these Bible Walk sessions helped to transform the participants into a family. We now experience ourselves as the Bible Walk family. When we encounter each other now, there is the light of recognition and something else special in our eyes when we greet each other. We were the ones who went out to meet other members of our extended family, our Israeli and Palestinian sisters and brothers.

The Bible Walk sessions helped us to become more open and loving in our embrace of each other and of our spiritual homeland and our brothers and sisters in the Middle East. We look forward to staying together, studying and reflecting together, and going out to meet even more of our human family in other parts of the world.

We came back enriched in a way that was made possible because of the Bible Walk preparation.

Cherry Baylor-Butler

Faith communities and political organizations must do all that they can do to bring about peace in our world.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” The followers of Jesus have been called to peace. When he called them they found their peace, for he is their peace. But now they are told that they must not only *have* peace but *make* it.”

However, it is in each individual human being that a change must take place in

their hearts and minds.³⁰⁰ Peace is brought about when the individual desires to bring about peace and to follow the commandment of Jesus Christ to love their fellow man.

“Deep within the human heart is a longing for a holy time
when “all will be one,” a dream of a new heaven and a new earth
... This, ultimately, is the undersong of every joining.”³⁰¹

When explorers are empowered with new values and new perspectives, they can enrich their lives and the lives of others. They have the power to change the world one person at a time. Learning should be about healing and the pursuit of wholeness. Deep within each of us we have a yearning for oneness. We can reach oneness because the One we love is One. Learning should result in empowerment and liberation. Learning should be about transcendence and reclaiming the Divine as we sing the one song with our many voices.

³⁰⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future to Be Possible: Commentaries on the Five Wonderful Precept*, (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 1993).

³⁰¹ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), 76.

APPENDICS

Appendix A



Appendix B



The Riverside Church Adult Christian Education Facilitator's Guide

The Riverside Church Adult Christian Education Committee is an educational ministry made up of volunteers who provide ongoing learning opportunities for adults who wish to strengthen their faith by increasing their knowledge and understanding of the Bible.

Our Mission

The mission of The Riverside Adult Christian Education Committee is to develop a program of biblical learning in a welcoming, inclusive, and interactive environment of sharing that fosters spiritual growth and strengthens Christian identity for the members and friends of The Riverside Church.

As the facilitator of an Adult Christian Education study group, you will function in a variety of roles at different times. You are first of all a *learner*. Being a facilitator will provide you with a wonderful opportunity for learning more about the Bible. You are not expected to be an expert on all the material on which the course is based. However, you are expected to be prepared for the sessions that you are to facilitate so that you are able to guide the members of the group in a productive study.

As a result of your reading in preparation for leading each session, you will also become a *resource* person. You are not expected to know all the answers to every question that is raised, but you should be able to direct participants to resources that will assist them to find answers for themselves.

You will be a *planner* who works intentionally to consider the time available, the needs, interest, and abilities of the participants, and the resources necessary in order to develop an appropriate plan for each session.

Planning for leading a group study is an art. There is no right session plan for every topic or every situation or every leader. Neither is there just one right way to go about planning. You need to be willing to practice the act of planning until you find a process that works effectively for you.

Session plans should include activities that involve participants in investigations, discussion, reflection, and application. The more comfortable you become in guiding the group's process, the more effective

the study will be for them.

At first, some participants may prefer having you tell them what they should know about the material. There will be times when you may be tempted to tell them all that you know. However, you will be most effective as a leader and the group will gain most from the course when they are guided by you in a variety of participatory activities as you explore the Bible together.

With the constraints of time and the possibility of a great body of material to explore, facilitators must be flexible. Unplanned questions will arise, activities will take longer than anticipated, and participants may want to go more slowly than you feel necessary.

Given the busy schedules of most people, there will be times when participants may arrive to a study session with minimum preparation. While participants will be asked to read the biblical text for the session before the group meets, some may not have an opportunity to complete this task before they arrive at the study. Provide some time, as a part of the session plan, to review the key texts that serve as the foundation for the session. You may want to consider having one person read the entire passage or have participants read one verse or section each in turn. When working in pairs or small groups, be sure that those who are not prepared are distributed among the groups rather than being placed together.

Some participants will have a great deal of experience with study groups, but for others this will be the first time they are involved in an in-depth study as adults. It is important for each person to feel that he or she belongs to the group. You will need to encourage both the experienced and inexperienced participants to be mindful and appreciative of each other.

As a facilitator, you will find Riversiders possess manifold (even esoteric) interests and talents which they are eager to share and explore in community. You will find in your session many individuals who revel in explorations of the mind and spirit. Many take full advantage of the strong education ministry of Riverside. Those who attend Christian Education study groups can be expected to engage you with insightful comments and challenging questions. Given the engaged mindset of our Riversiders, we

encourage discussion and interactive leadership of the Bible Study session.

We also know that our Riversiders thirst for more, so we provide them with handouts for further reading and for on - line resources. We also direct them to our library and our librarian, Michelle Abbott - Smith, with whom we work closely to ensure ready access of resources. We set a high standard for our inquiry, simply because our Riversiders demand and deserve it. They are self - starters and embrace lifelong learning.

Guidelines for Adult Education

The following guidelines provide some convictions about adult education.

Adults are responsible for their own learning. It is important not to develop dependent relationships whereby the learners look to the leader as the authority and primary source of information. Adult Bible Study sessions should be interactive. Facilitators should encourage group and individual participation and response by offering a balance of lecture and discussion.

Adults learn best when they can participate directly in the process of their own learning. Opportunities should be provided in each session for participants to make decisions about what and how they will learn and to interact with the subject matter and other learners.

Adults represent a variety of learning styles as well as different stages of physical, emotional, and spiritual development. Participants should be related to individually, without assuming that all adults are the same. Participants should be encouraged to work at their own pace and to make applications that are appropriate to themselves. Learning is reinforced best when adults have the opportunity to practice skills and to express personal insights and interpretations in their own words.

Learning occurs within an environment of trusting relationships. It is important to develop a process whereby participants will be encouraged to share feelings, needs, and concerns

as well as information and ideas. In such a setting participants will be helped to become caring about and supportive of one another. Activities and resources should represent a cooperative, collaborative style of learning.

Adults who have positive self - concepts are less threatened by new information and experiences. Facilitators are encouraged to use strategies and words that enhance a person's self - worth.

Adults will increase their knowledge and skill to a greater extent when they gain a sense of satisfaction and experience success in those activities in which they participate. The session's plan should present a variety of activities that are designed to enable participants to achieve satisfaction and success.

Suggested readings and resources on adult learning can be found in Appendix A.

Planning the Study Sessions

Facilitator's should submit a draft of their session to the Adult Christian Education Committee at least one week in advance of the session.

A good plan should include the session's learning objectives. This is what you will help the participants to accomplish as a result of their study. It is appropriate to share these objectives with the members of the group at the beginning of each session. The selection of activities is to be guided by the objectives considered most important. The learning objectives can also be used as a basis for evaluating whether you and the participants have accomplished what was intended.

Be aware that accomplishing the learning objectives is not all there is to leading a study group. Some of the most important things that happen among the participants cannot be evaluated by learning objectives. Things such as forming community, growing in faith, nurturing the spiritual life, and other matters regarding the Christian faith are important to the spiritual growth of the individual participant.

Facilitators are asked to develop handouts for the study prior to the session. The handouts should include a list of readings and resources that the facilitator has collected and provided for the participants. These should be distributed at the time of the session. The Adult Christian Education Committee also requests an electronic or hard copy of your handout materials so that we can include these in our Adult Christian Education archives.

In order for participants to better know who the facilitators are, we ask that each facilitator provide a brief bio or a resume (See Appendix 2).

Inform the Adult Christian Education coordinator of any specific AV needs such as PowerPoint equipment, a microphone, a TV monitor, a laptop computer, or a tape recorder (See Appendix 2).

Inform us if you need an easel and a giant paper pad (See Appendix 2).

Our typical room configurations are conference tables arranged in a rectangular shape which allows for easier discussion as all participants can see each other. Inform us at least a week in advance of the session if you need the room set up in a different way or if you need the room darkened for movies or slides.

The Riverside Church will provide copies of the NRSV Bible if requested.

The Riverside Church has a set of Bible maps. However, their size may not make for easy viewing by a large group. We recommend that your handouts include a map or that you arrange to project a map on a screen.

On the Day of the Session

Facilitators are asked to begin and end sessions on time, if possible.

Be sure to distribute attendance sheets and have participants fill out their name, phone number, and email address.

Facilitator - led or participant - led prayer should begin and end your session.

The Adult Christian Education Committee will provide the facilitator with feedback surveys that are to be distributed to the participants at the conclusion of the session or study group. These are to be given to the coordinator. The Committee will share the feedback with each facilitator within two weeks after the session.

Resources

The Riverside Church and the Adult Christian Education Committee are available to serve as resources as you develop your study session. Members of the committee have a wide variety of professional and educational experience and access to many resources in both the immediate area and the larger community. We are eager to work with the many ministries of The Riverside Church in order to help participants better understand the biblical foundation of Christian life. The committee collaborates closely with The Riverside Church librarian to ensure that Riversiders and friends have easy access to as broad array of publications and other resources as our budget allows. We encourage you to visit The Riverside Church Library.

The Education Ministry as well as all of Riverside's clergy are education resources.

Appendix 1

Readings and resources on **Adult Learning/ Learning Tips, Tools, and Resources** taken from:

<http://adulthood.about.com/od/adulthoodhistory/l/aa080899.htm>

Dr. Malcolm Shepherd Knowles 1913 - 1997

Why is Malcolm Knowles one of the most frequently cited theorists in adult education, and why is he frequently referred to as “the father of adult learning”?

Knowles popularized the concept of “andragogy”, although he was not the first to use the term. Andragogy first appeared in the writing of a German teacher, named Alexander Kapp, in 1833. Commenting on Plato’s education theory, Kapp contrasted andragogy (andr - meaning ‘man’) with pedagogy (paid - meaning ‘child’) and agogos meaning ‘leading’.

In *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (1970), Knowles defined “andragogy” as “an emerging technology for adult learning”. His four andragogical assumptions are that adults:

- A. move from dependency to self - directedness;
- B. draw upon their reservoir of experience for learning;
- C. are ready to learn when they assume new roles;
- D. want to solve problems and apply new knowledge immediately.

Accordingly, Knowles suggested that adult educators should:

- set a cooperative learning climate;
- create mechanisms for mutual planning;
- arrange for a diagnosis of learner needs and interests;
- enable the formulation of learning objectives based on the diagnosed needs and interests;
- design sequential activities for achieving the objectives;
- execute the design by selecting methods, materials, and

resources;

- evaluate the quality of the learning experience while re - diagnosing needs for further learning.

Initially defined as, “the art and science of helping adults learn” andragogy has come to be understood as an alternative to pedagogy and a learner - focused approach for people of all ages.

Appendix 2

Course Title:

Date of Session(s):

Facilitator's (s') Name:

1. The session will include the following materials for participants:
(checklist)

☐ Facilitator's Bio (brief) or attach resume

☐ Biblical Scripture

☐ Other Readings

☐ Handout(s)

☐ Pictures/Illustrations

☐ Maps

☐ Other

2. Technical and Other Needs

☐ Laptop/computer

☐ Power Point Set Up

☐ Projector/Screen

☐ Easel/ Large Paper Pad

☐

Other _____

Attendance Sheet

Bible Walk: A Journey from Riverside to Ancient Israel

Today's Date:

Facilitator:

Name

E - Mail

Adult Christian Education Questionnaire

Name (optional):

Date:

At present, do you attend a religious education class? Why or why not.

What issues of a spiritual nature are you most concerned about?

What learning methods do you enjoy most? (debates, testimonies of first hand experiences, audiovisual methods, lectures, role play, discussions, etc.)
Explain.

Written Statement of Personal Belief

Name:

Date:

1. What is the relationship between the God you worship and the God others worship?

2. How do other faiths fit into your understanding of salvation and eschatology?

3. How do you account for religious conversion, into and out of your faith?

4. What does God demand of you when you interact with members of another faith?

Course Evaluation

Name:

Date:

Course Title: Bible Walk: A Journey from Riverside to Ancient Israel

Facilitator:

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Your candid answers will enable us to judge whether or not we are meeting your needs.

1. After participating in this course do you believe that you can engage in relationships with Jews without jeopardizing your own faith tradition?
2. Did participating in the pre-trip learning sessions have an impact on your experience in Israel or what was the impact on your trip experience if you were unable to attend the pre-trip learning sessions?

3. What was the course's greatest value to you?
4. Did the course lack anything that you had hoped for?
5. Share with us your thoughts on your facilitators' role with respect to style, clarity, content, and organization.
6. If you have any specific suggestions for improving this course in the future, please share them with us.

On behalf of The Riverside Church, we, the members of the Adult Christian Education Committee, deeply appreciate the contribution you make to our community and our spiritual journey.

Your gifted leadership in exploring the Bible in fellowship with the members and friends of The Riverside Church is most welcomed.

With much appreciation,

Rev. Dr. Arnold Isidore Thomas, Minister of Education
(athomas@theriversidechurchny.org)

Eugene Melino, Chairperson

Colleen Birchett
Laura Harris
Joel Horton
Marjorie Horton
Bruce Ill
Russ Jennings
Ronald Lonesome
Brian O'Dell
Luvon Roberson
Karen Taylor
Anesta Vannoy - Kwame
Barrington Wright

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Roberson, Luvon. *Open Bible Study Facilitator's Guide*. The Riverside Church. New York. 2008.

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Compiled by Anesta Vannoy - Kwame. The Riverside Church. New York. January, 2010.
Updated January, 2013.

Appendix C

God of Grace and God of Glory

1 God of grace and God of glo - ry, on your peo - ple
 2 Lo! the hosts of e - vil round us scorn your Christ, as -
 3 Heal your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness, bend our pride to
 4 Save us from weak re - sig - na - tion to the e - vils

pour your power; crown your an - cient Church's sto - ry, bring its
 sail his ways! Fears and doubts too long have bound us free our
 your con - trol; shame our wan - ton, sel - fish glad - ness, rich in
 we de - plore; let the gift of your sal - va - tion be our

bud to glo - rious flower. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age
 hearts to work and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
 things and poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
 glo - ry e - ver - more. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,

for the fa - cing of this hour, for the fa - cing of this hour.
 for the li - ving of these days, for the li - ving of these days.
 lest we miss your king - dom's goal, lest we miss your king - dom's goal.
 ser - ving you whom we a - dore, ser - ving you whom we a - dore.

Text: Harry E. Fosdick (1878-1969), alt.
 Tune: John Hughes (1873-1932)



87 87 877
 CWM RHONDDA
www.hymnary.org/text/god_of_grace_and_god_of_glory

This hymn is in the public domain. You may freely use this score for personal and congregational worship. If you reproduce the score, please credit Hymnary.org as the source.

Appendix D

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Teacher's Lesson Plan

Session 1 : What is Critical Interpretation?

Instructional Outcome

Explorers will know what is meant by the term “critical interpretation”.

Assessment

1. Explorers will state their working definition of the term “critical interpretation”.

Strategies

1. As explorers arrive ask them to write their names on name tags so that all participants can get to know each other. (Do not forget your name tag. Collect and retain name tags for the next session.)
2. Put out snacks. Before the class ends discuss with the group if they would like to have snacks each session. If they do decide how this will be handled. (The group may decide to chip in financially each week or they may decide to take turns. Use any method that is agreeable to the participants.
3. Have Bibles available for each participant.
4. Open the session with a reading from scripture Matthew 7:12.
5. Opening Prayer
6. Welcome explorers to this introductory class on critical interpretation. Introduce yourself.

7. Begin by asking explorers why did they decide to take this class and what do they hope to get out of this experience.
8. Share with explorers a general definition of the term “critical interpretation”. Tell them that when studying sacred literature this term may also be called “hermeneutics” or “exegesis”.
9. Help them to see that this is not a new exercise but one that they have been employing since they were very young.
10. Share with explorers that critical interpretation is a science and an art. It is a science because there are rules that we follow when we critically interpret. It is an art because communication is flexible and if we use a rigid application of the rules it is possible to distort the true meaning of what is being communicated.
11. Share with explorers what will be discussed next session. Ask them to read and reflect on a favorite scripture. Tell them to be sure to bring their Bibles to the next session and to be prepared to share with others their reflections on the scripture they chose.

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context.

Session 1 : What is Critical Interpretation?

Scripture: Matthew 7:12

Opening Prayer:

Leader: Affirming our place among the disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ, let us worship God.

All: As disciples, we seek to testify to the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, to embody that love in the world, and to respond to the leading of God's Holy Spirit. We seek God's grace in our common effort to understand ever more fully how to live as the body of Christ in our religiously plural and culturally diverse time and place. Amen.

What is meant by the term “critical interpretation”?

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Teacher's Lesson Plan

Session 2 : Who Am I? What Baggage Do I Carry?

Instructional Outcome

Explorers will recognize the need for self - understanding and how their personal history, culture, the society they live in, etc. can affect their interpretation of text and other things that come into their lives.

Assessment

Explorers will complete a self – inventory and reflect on what it reveals about how they may interpret text.

Strategies

1. Hand out name tags. Provide name tags for any new participants.
2. Put out snacks.
3. Have Bibles available for each participant.
4. Open the session with a reading from scripture Psalm 43 : 3.
5. Opening Prayer
6. Welcome participants to the class. Re - introduce yourself.
7. Ask explorers to share their scriptures and what the scripture they chose meant to them.
8. Share with explorers that this session will help them to recognize their own cultural and social forces that may influence their interpretations.
9. Ask explores to complete the self - inventory. Tell them to try to answer all of the questions but it will be alright if they do not get all of the questions answered.

10. Ask the participants if their answers to the self - inventory revealed anything to them and to share their discoveries.
11. Discuss the importance of detecting their own biases and assumptions.
12. Share with explorers what will be discussed next session. Ask them to read and reflect on a specific scripture of your (the facilitator's) choosing. Ask them to be prepared to share their reflections with others next session. Ask them to be sure to bring their Bibles to the next session.

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Session 2 : Who Am I?: The Baggage We Carry.

Scripture: Psalm 43 : 3

Opening Prayer:

Leader: O God of our strength
speak for Your servants are listening.
Your voice is in our spirits.

All: Oh God of steadfast love,
transform our hearts by Your Spirit.
For with you is the fountain of life;
in Your light we see light.
Lord may we be guided by Your wisdom and power
and be filled with Your justice and truth.
Amen.

Completion of Self – Inventory

Reflection and Discussion on what is revealed from the Self - Inventory

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Teacher's Lesson Plan

Session 3 : The Lenses We Use.

Instructional Outcome

Explorers will recognize the factors that influence them when they read Sacred Texts.

Assessment

Explorers will be able to recognize and verbally share the lenses they believe they use when reading Sacred Texts.

Strategies

1. Hand out name tags. Provide name tags for any new participants.
2. Put out snacks.
3. Have Bibles available for each participant.
4. Open the session with a reading from scripture James 1 : 18.
5. Opening Prayer
6. Welcome participants to the class. Re - introduce yourself.
7. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the scripture that was chosen to be reflected on.
8. Ask each explorer to share their analysis of what the scripture is revealing.
9. After all the explorers has had an opportunity to share, return to each person and ask them to begin to examine what influences may have caused the scripture to mean what it did for them.

10. Ask explorers to examine what religious, historical, political, cultural influences they may have used to exegete the scripture. Ask explorers to examine what in their personal background could have influenced their beliefs of what the scripture is revealing.
11. Facilitator will share some insights as to the lenses that are often used when a sacred text is read.
12. Ask explorers to ask themselves specific questions when reading Scripture such as:
 - a. What do we know from reading the Scripture?
 - b. How do we know what we know?
 - c. What evidence have we used to validate what we know?
 - d. What inferences and conclusions have I drawn from the Scripture?
13. Share with explorers what will be discussed next session. Ask them to read and reflect on a piece of writing that you (the facilitator) will provide for them. Be sure to choose a writing that has obvious biases. Ask them to be prepared to share their reflections with others next session. Ask them to be sure to bring their Bibles to the next session.

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Session 3 : The Lenses We Use.

Scripture: James 1 : 18.

Opening Prayer:

Leader: Almighty God, thank You for the ways
in which Your power within us allows
us to do more than we could ever do alone.

All: We acknowledge our commitment to live
unashamed as Your disciples.
As we seek to realize Your presence all
around us,
lead us to the delight of communion with You.
We thank You for blessing us with peace.
Amen.

Reflection and Discussion on what the Scripture is saying to us.

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Teacher's Lesson Plan

Session 4: About the Author

Instructional Outcome

Explorers will recognize the need for having some background knowledge about the author including the author's history, culture, politics and religious persuasion.

Assessment

Explorers will be able to state several tools that can be used to get to know an author.

Strategies

1. Hand out name tags. Provide name tags for any new participants.
2. Put out snacks.
3. Have Bibles available for each participant.
4. Open the session with a reading from scripture James 4 : 11 – 12.
5. Opening Prayer
6. Welcome participants to the class.
7. Share with the explorers that they will develop a method by which they can better understand an author's point of view.

8. Discuss with explorers questions that they can ask themselves that can help them to know an author better.
 - a. Who is the author?
 - b. What do I know about the author?
 - c. What clues can I use that will tell me more about the author?
 - d. What can I learn about the author from other sources?
9. Allow explorers to discuss what they have deduced about the Scripture they read for home study in pairs or small groups.
10. Ask each pair or small group to share with the larger group.
11. Share with explorers what will be discussed next session. Ask them to read and reflect on a Sacred Text from a faith tradition other than Christian of your (the facilitator's) choosing. Ask them to be prepared to share their reflections with others next session. Ask them to be sure to bring their Bibles to the next session.

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Session 4: About the Author

Scripture: James 4 : 11 - 12

Opening Prayer:

Leader: O God, may your gift of peace touch
this world as never before.
Help us to hold fast to the path
You have laid out for us.

All: Prince of Peace, help us to know the
power of Your love for us,
and help us to share that power
as we declare our love for You and
one another.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Teacher's Lesson Plan

Session 5: Polishing Our Lenses

Instructional Outcome

Explorers will recognize the need for examining a piece of writing.

Assessment

Explorers will be able to relate ways in which a piece of writing can be examined.

Strategies

1. Hand out name tags.
2. Put out snacks.
3. Have Bibles available for each participant.
4. Open the session with a reading from scripture Luke 10 : 25 – 28.
5. Opening Prayer
6. Welcome participants to the class.
7. Share with the explorers that they will develop a method by which they may be able to determine the reliability of a statement in a piece of writing.
8. Ask a volunteer to read the selection that was chosen.

9. Discussion on questions explorers can ask that can help in determining the reliability of a statement or a piece of writing.
 - a. Does this author have a vested interest in influencing what I take away from this piece of writing or what I believe about the topic?
 - b. Is the author a reliable source on the topic?
 - c. Are there other sources that I can use to compare what this author is saying?
 - d. Is the author using arguments that are consistent to support their conclusion?
 - e. Is there a logical progression from the argument to the conclusion?
 - f. Is there anything missing from the argument that would change the conclusion?
 - g. What questions can I ask about the subject and the author

10. Share with explorers what will be discussed next session. Ask them to read and reflect on a Sacred Text from a faith tradition other than Christian. Ask them to be prepared to share their reflections with others next session. Explorers should be prepared to state what skills they used in understanding what the author of their piece of writing was trying to convey to them. Ask them to be sure to bring their Bibles to the next session.

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Session 5: Polishing Our Lenses

Scripture: Luke 10 : 25 - 28

Opening Prayer:

Leader: Oh loving Creator of humankind,
we know that all relationships begin with
a meeting.

All: The model for our meeting others is
always the depth of presence and
engagement which marked Jesus' meeting
with those around Him.

In our everyday lives, we will
meet and form relationships with men
and women of other religious
traditions. At times these may be
difficult relationships, based on
bitter memories, or marked by tension
or fearfulness.

We have been created for loving
community and will not disengage from
trying to build bridges of understanding
and cooperation throughout the human
family.

Amen.

When I read a statement or piece of writing how can I determine what
the author wants me to know or believe at the conclusion of my reading?

What tools can I use to help me determine the truth of what the author
wants me to know or believe at the conclusion of my reading?

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Teacher's Lesson Plan

Session 6: Dialogue Between Faith Traditions in the Interpretation of Sacred Texts.

Instructional Outcome

Explorers will recognize the need for interfaith dialogue as it relates to interpretation of Sacred Texts.

Assessment

Explorers will complete an evaluation of the sessions and the facilitator.

Strategies

1. Hand out name tags.
2. Put out snacks.
3. Have Bibles available for each participant.
4. Open the session with a reading from scripture Luke 10 : 29 - 37
5. Opening Prayer
6. Welcome participants to the class.
7. Hand out a Sacred Text of your (the facilitator's) choice that is from a faith tradition other than Christian.
8. Tell each explorer that they will use what they have learned in this course to deduce what the author of the Sacred Text is conveying to its audience.
9. Allow time for the explorers to share their Text and their insights from the Text.

10. Share with the explorers that they have developed a method by which they can understand text or artifacts from another's point of view.
11. Provide each explorer with an evaluation form for the course.

Closing Prayer

Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context

Session 6: Dialogue Between Faith Traditions in the Interpretation of Sacred Texts.

Scripture: Luke 10 : 29 – 37.

Prayer:

Dear Father/ Mother God,

Help us to remember that true relationship involves risk. When we approach others with an open heart, it is possible that we may be hurt.

Help us to understand that when we encounter others who have an open mind we may have to change our positions or give up certainty, but we know that we may also gain new insights.

Lord, help us to seek to answer our questions, to search the Scriptures for answers, and to be attentive to the Spirit. Help us to mature in Christ in new ways, in love and in service to others.

May our knowledge and love of You be enriched as we hear others proclaim to us how You have worked in their lives. And because we know that those we meet are also Your beloved children, we acknowledge the fact that this risk is also an opportunity for which we give You thanks and praise.

Amen.

Reading and discussing Sacred Texts

Completing evaluation forms

Closing Prayer

Lord, let me be an instrument of thy peace.

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

it is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

- Saint Francis of Assisi

Name:

Date:

Critical Interpretation

A Self - Inventory

Adapted from a self – inventory created by Dr. Lucinda Mosher, Th. D.

1) Religious History / Tradition

What is my denominational history and tradition?

2) Authoritative Criteria

What are the norms or standards of your denomination? These may include the theology of a founder of the denomination, a religious institution, a confession, a creed, or a set of customs.

3) Ethnicity/‘Race’

How do my ethnic or ‘racial’ history, culture, and consciousness, influence my interpretation of my religion’s scriptures?

4) Gender / Sexual Orientation

How does my gender and / or sexual orientation influence my interpretation of my religion’s scriptures?

5) Disabled / Abled - Bodiness

How do my experiences with abled - and disabled – bodiness affect my interpretation of my religion’s scriptures?

6) Community Priorities

How do the values, welfare, and survival needs that are explicitly recognized or implicitly felt in my religion and community influence my interpretation of my religion's sacred texts?

7) Explicit Political Position

How does my avowed political position influence my scriptural interpretation?

8) Published Resources

How do the published resources I regularly or sometimes consult influence my scriptural interpretation?

9) Intent and Effect of Scriptural Preaching

How does my house of worship or its religious leader understand the role of scripture in preaching as an aspect of the mission of this house of worship, and how does that understanding influence my own pattern of scriptural interpretation?

10) Family Influence

What was the characteristic view of my religion's scripture in my childhood home?

Please use this space to add comments.

[illegible]

Course Evaluation

Name:

Date:

Course Title: Introduction to Critical Interpretation in a Multifaith Context
Facilitator:

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Your candid answers will enable us to judge whether or not we are meeting your needs.

1. After participating in this course do you believe that you can read the Bible and other Sacred Texts using tools that would help you understand what the author is conveying to their audience.
2. What was the course's greatest value to you?

3. Did the course lack anything that you had hoped for?
4. Share with us your thoughts on your facilitators' role with respect to style, clarity, content, and organization.
5. If you have any specific suggestions for improving this course in the future, please share them with us.

Appendix E



WELCOME

- Orientation
- Today we will discuss the geography of Israel.
- Introduction of the itinerary for our trip to Israel.
- Why is it called the Holy Land?

Bethlehem

ARCHAEOLOGY

Bethlehem

Town in Judah
Home of King David
Birthplace of Jesus

HISTORY

Bethlehem

- Town in Judah
- Home of King David
- Birthplace of Jesus



SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

Bethlehem – Luke 2 : 1 – 21

- Star of Bethlehem – Matthew 2 : 1 – 10
- Shepherd's Field – Luke 2 : 8 – 20
- The Church of the Nativity –
Matthew 2 : 1 – 7
Luke 2 : 6 - 7



WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 -
 - - Masada
 - Kaser el Yahud
 -
 -



ARCHAEOLOGY

- The Importance of the Bible and Archaeology.
- Breakthroughs in Biblical Archaeology



HISTORY

- **Masada**
- **Kaser el Yahud** – Baptismal Site near Jericho
-

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

-
- **Masada**
- 2Samuel 17
- Acts 5 : 34 - 39
-
- **Kaser el Yahud**
- Baptismal Site near Jericho
- Mathew 3
-

WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - - **Qumran**
 - **The Dead Sea**
 - **The Dead Sea Scrolls**



ARCHAEOLOGY

- Biblical Archaeology:
 - An Analytical Introduction**
 - Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls**



HISTORY

- **Qumran**
- **The Dead Sea**
- **The Dead Sea Scrolls**

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

- Qumran**
 - Matthew 23
-
-
- **The Dead Sea**
 - Ezekiel 47
-
-
- **The Dead Sea Scrolls**
 - Isaiah 34; Micah 7; Luke 6
-
-
-
-

WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - Galilee
 -
 -
 - The Sea of Galilee
 -



ARCHAEOLOGY

- There are many archaeological sites in Galilee.



HISTORY

○ Galilee

- The word Galilee means circuit or "district" in Hebrew.
- Jesus grew up there and began his ministry there.
- In 1934 a chapel was built on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The chapel was to commemorate the words Jesus spoke to Peter:
- "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep"

○ The Sea of Galilee

- Jesus calling of the Apostles
- Jesus calming the Waves
- Jesus walking on the Water
- Jesus curing the demonic spirit

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

○ Galilee

- Matthew 15

○

○ The Sea of Galilee

- Matthew 4:18-22; 8:2 - 34; 14:22 - 33;

○

- Mark 1: 16 - 20; 3:7 - 9; 4:34 - 41; 6:45 - 52; 5: 1 - 20

○

- Luke 5: 1 - 11; 8:22 - 25; 8: 26 - 39

○

- John 6:16 - 21

○

○

WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
- **Jericho**
- **Capernaum**



ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Jericho**
- **Capernaum**



HISTORY

Jericho

-
-
- **Capernaum**
-

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

- **Jericho** – Joshua 6: 1 – 16;
- Matthew 20:29 – 34;
- Mark 10: 46 – 52
- Luke 18: 35 – 43; 19: 1 - 10
-
-

WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - Tabgha**
- - Mount of the Beatitudes**
 - Ginosar**
 - Mount Arbel**
 - Capernaum**
-



ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Tabgha**
-
- **Mount of the Beatitudes**
- **Ginosar**
- **Mount Arbel**
-



HISTORY

- Tabgha
-
- Mount of the Beatitudes
- Ginosar
- Mount Arbel
-



SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

Capernaum

- Matthew 9 : 2 – 9; 12 : 9 – 14; 23
- Mark 2 : 3 – 14; 3 : 1 – 6
- Luke 5 : 18 – 28; 6 : 6 – 11; 10 : 15



WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - Golan Heights
 - Bethsaida
 - Mount of Beatitudes

ARCHAEOLOGY

Golan Heights



◦ Bethsaida

located along the north/northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Some scholars believe that there was two Bethsidas. The precise locations are not known.

Bethsaida played a key role in the ministry of Jesus. (John 1 : 44; John 12 : 21).

Jesus healed (Mark 8:22)

HISTORY

- **Golan Heights**



- Bethsaida**

Philip, the third son of Herod the Great, rebuilt the village of Bethsaida and renamed it “Julia” in honor of Augustus daughter.



SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

Tabgha

- John 21: 1 - 23



- **Mount of the Beatitudes**

- Matthew Chapters 5 – 7

- Luke 6 : 20 - 49



WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - Mount Ben Tal
 - Syria



ARCHAEOLOGY

- Mount Ben Tal
-
-
- Syria



HISTORY

- **Mount Ben Tal**
-
-
- **Syria**



SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

Syria

- **2Kings 5**
- **Isaiah 7**
- **Isaiah 17**



WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - **Caesarea Philippi**
 -
 -
 - **Mount Carmel**
 -
 -
 - **Caesarea**



ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Caesarea Philippi**
-
-
- **Mount Carmel**
-
-
- **Caesarea**



HISTORY

- **Caesarea Philippi**
-
-
- **Mount Carmel**
-
-
- **Caesarea**



SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

Caesarea Philippi

- **Matthew 16**
-
- **Caesarea**
 - **Acts chapters 10, 25**
 - **2Corinthians 2**



WELCOME

- Today we will discuss

oNazareth

-
-

ARCHAEOLOGY

Nazareth

- The small village of Nazareth is located in rocky limestone hills in lower Galilee. It was about 60 acres in total with a population of about 500.
-
- Nazareth overlooks the fertile Jezreel Valley to the south and is about 15 miles from the Sea of Galilee. It is just three or four miles south of Sepphoris.
-
- Beneath the Church of the Annunciation, archaeologists have found evidence that ancient Nazareth was an agricultural village. Pottery was found there dating from the Iron Age (900 – 600 B. C.E.) to the Byzantine period (330 – 640 C.E.). Also found were Jewish tombs. Four of the tombs found were sealed with rolling stones. This was typical of tombs used up to 70 C. E.
-
- Nazareth was interconnected, by trade, with other villages and towns in the western part of Galilee.
-
-
-
-

HISTORY

Nazareth

- It was in Nazareth that tradition states that the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- This small village was the residence of Mary and Joseph, Jesus' earthly parents (Luke 2:59).
- Jesus grew up in Nazareth, it was His home (Matthew 2:23; Luke 4:16).
- Jesus' public ministry began in Nazareth (Mark 1:9).
- In a synagogue in Nazareth Jesus proclaimed that the good news for oppressed people, that Isaiah prophesied about, was coming true (Luke 4:18-21). Jesus was also rejected here (Luke 4:22-30).
- Nazareth was just a few short miles north of Sepphoris which lies at the cross-roads of two main trade routes. During Jesus' youth, Sepphoris was a royal Greco-Roman city. It was the center of Roman domination over Galilean villages and towns and may have represented Roman oppression to men of the people who lived under its rule.
-
- Nazareth remained in relative obscurity prompting Nathanael's remark, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).
-
- Matthew 21:11 identifies Jesus as "the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee". Mark and Luke refers to Him as "Jesus of Nazareth" (Mark 1:24; Luke 18:37).
- The titulus, an official placard that Pilate affixed to the cross that bore Jesus, dubbed Him "JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS" (John 19:19). Jesus' earliest followers were known as "the Nazarene sect" (Acts 24:5).
-
- Jesus left Nazareth and settled in the Capernaum to continue His ministry.
-
-

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

○ Nazareth

-
- **Matthew 1 : 18 – 25**
-
- **Luke 1 : 26 – 38; 2 : 39 – 52; 4 : 16 – 30**
-

WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - Beth Shearim
 - Tel Megiddo
 - Haifa
 - Temples



ARCHAEOLOGY

- Beth Shearim
- Tel Megiddo
- Haifa



HISTORY

- Beth Shearim
-
- Tel Megiddo
-
- Haifa

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

Megiddo

Zechariah 12

Temples

- Luke 1 : 5 – 22
- Luke 2 : 22 – 38

Luke 2 : 41 – 50

John Chapters 7, 8

⋮

WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - **Temple Mount**
 -
 -
 - **Muslim Quarter**
 -
 -
 - **Western Wall**
 -



ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Temple Mount**
-
-
- **Muslim Quarter**
-
-
- **Western Wall**
-



HISTORY

- Temple Mount
-
-
- Muslim Quarter
-
-
- Western Wall
-



SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

- Temples
-
- Matthew 21: 1 – 9; 21: 23,39; 24: 1 - 51
- Mark 11: 1 – 11, 27; 12: 40; 13 : 1 - 37
- Luke 19: 29 – 38; 20: 1 - 47
-
-
-
-



WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - **Cardo**
 -
 - **Harva Synagogue**
- - Shabbat**
 - Mount of Olives**

ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Cardo**
 -
- **Harva Synagogue**
 -
- **Shabbat**

HISTORY

- **Cardo**
-
- **Harva Synagogue**
-
- **Shabbat**



SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

Mount of Olives

- **Zechariah 14**



WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - Mount of Olives
 -
 -
 - Pater Noster Church
 -
 -



ARCHAEOLOGY

- Mount of Olives
-
-
-
- Pater Noster Church
-
-



HISTORY

- **Mount of Olives**
 -
 -
 -
- **Pater Noster Church**
 -
 -



SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

- Pater Noster Church**
 -
 - **Matthew 6: 7 – 15**
 - **Luke 11 : 1 - 4**
 -
 -



WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - **Garden of Gethsemane**
 -
 -
 -
 - **Pools of Bethesda**



ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Garden of Gethsemane**
-
-
-
- **Pools of Bethesda**



HISTORY

- **Garden of Gethsemane**
-
-
-
- **Pools of Bethesda**

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

- Anesta Vannoy – Kwame – Facilitator
-
- **Garden of Gethsemane (Gethsemani)**
- Matthew 26 : 36 – 56
- Mark 14 : 32 – 52
- Luke 22 : 39 – 53
- John 18 : 1 - 12
-
- **Pools of Bethesda**
- John 5 : 1 - 9
- John 5 : 16 – 18
- John 5 : 19 - 47

WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - **Via Dolorosa**
 -
 -
 -
 - **The Church of the Holy Sepulcher**
 -



ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Via Dolorosa**
 -
 -
 -
 - **The Church of the Holy Sepulcher**
 -



HISTORY

- **Via Dolorosa**
 -
 -
 -
- **The Church of the Holy Sepulcher**
 -

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

- **Via Dolorosa**
 - Matthew 26: 57 – 68; 27:11 - 33
 - Mark 14: 53 – 65; 15:1- 22
 - Luke 22: 54–71; 22: 8 – 12; 23:1 - 32
 - John 18:13 – 40; 19:17 - 18
- **The Church of the Holy Sepulcher**
 - Matthew 27: 33 - 36; 28: 1 -10
 - Mark 15: 22 - 47; 16: 1 - 8
 - Luke 23: 33 - 56; 24: 1 -12
 - John 19: 17 - 42; 20:1 - 18

WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - **Garden Tomb**
 -
 -
 - **Ein Kerem**
 -
 -
 - **Mount Zion**



ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Garden Tomb**
-
-
- **Ein Kerem**
-
-
- **Mount Zion**



HISTORY

- **Garden Tomb**
-
-
- **Ein Kerem**
-
-
- **Mount Zion**



SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

- **Tombs**
- **Matthew Chapters 27 and 28**
- **Luke 9**
-
- **Mount Zion**
- **1Kings 2: 10**
- **Psalms 48**
- **Psalms 110**



WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - City of David
 -
 - King David's Tomb
 -
 - Siloam Pool
 -



ARCHAEOLOGY

- City of David
 -
 -
- King David's Tomb
 -
 -
- Siloam Pool
 -



HISTORY

- City of David
-
-
- King David's Tomb
-
-
- Siloam Pool
-

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

- City of David
- 2Samuel 1
-
- King David's Tomb
- 1Kings 2 : 10
- Siloam Pool
- John 9
-

WELCOME

- Today we will discuss
 - **King Hezekiah Tunnel**
 -
 - **Room of the Last Supper**
 -
 - **Cana**



ARCHAEOLOGY

- **King Hezekiah Tunnel**
-
-
- **Room of the Last Supper**
-
- **Cana**



HISTORY

- **King Hezekiah Tunnel**
- 2Kings 20
-
- **Room of the Last Supper**
- Matthew 26 : 17 - 35
- Mark 14 : 12 - 31
- Luke 22 : 7 - 38; 24:36 - 49
- John Chapters 13 to 17; 20 : 19 - 29
- Acts 2
-
-

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

- King Hezekiah Tunnel**
- 2 Kings 20
-
- **Room of the Last Supper**
- Matthew 26 : 17 - 35
- Mark 14 : 12 - 31
- Luke 22 : 7 - 38; 24 : 36 - 49
- John Chapters 13 to 17; 20 : 19 - 29
- Acts 2
- Cana**
- John 1 : 45 - 51; 2 : 1 - 12; 4 : 46 - 54

A Taste of Israel

o **A Pre Trip Celebration**



Appendix F

Anesta Vannoy-Kwame **Bible Walk: A Journey from Riverside to Ancient Israel**

September 17, 2012

Class Schedule Timeline

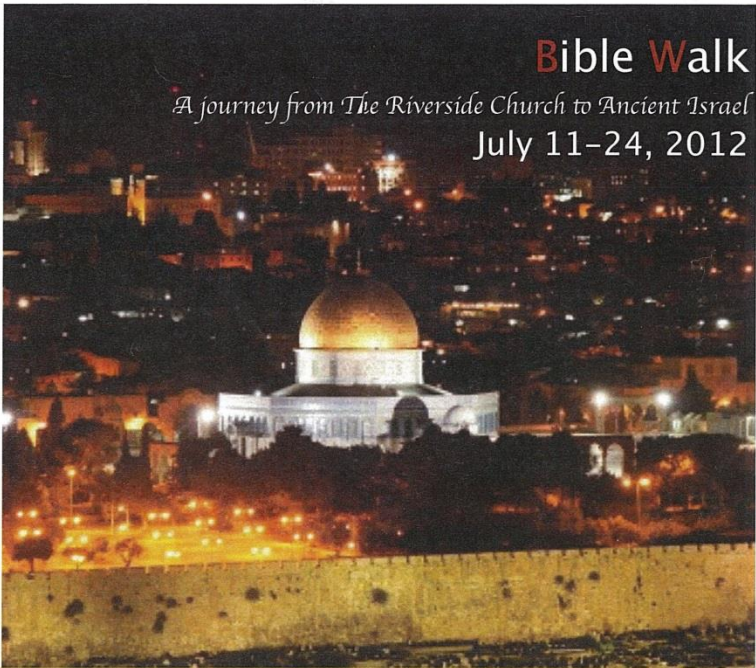
Welcome and Review	5 Minutes
Archaeology	30 Minutes
History	30 Minutes
Scriptures and Theology	15 Minutes
Questions and Answers	5 Minutes
Wrap-Up	5 Minutes
Total Time	1 Hour 30 Minutes

Appendix G The Budget

<u>Materials</u>	\$1,500.00 to 2,000.00
Binders with paper for taking notes during sessions	
Binders with travel information	
<i>Historical Atlas of the Bible Lands</i> (Each participant will receive this book)	
Copies of materials for facilitators and participants	
Journals for trip	
Several pamphlets	
Films, CD's, DVD's and other audio – visual materials	
<u>Food</u>	\$500.00
Initial Informational Luncheon	
Three Strategy Meetings	
Fundraiser for Youth going to Israel	
“Send Off” Celebration	
<u>Total</u>	\$2,000.00 to 2,500.00

Appendix H

Biblical Archaeology
Biblical History
Theology



Bible Walk
A journey from The Riverside Church to Ancient Israel
July 11-24, 2012

Israel Jerusalem Bethlehem

Bible Walk:
A journey from Riverside to Ancient Israel.

The Riverside Church Ministry of Education is hosting a 13-day tour of Israel, the Land of the Bible.

The Riverside Church endeavors to help you explore the depths of the bible, from the narratives of the New Testament to retracing the steps of the life and ministry of Jesus and the Journey of Paul, to the Old Testament, Journey of the Exodus.

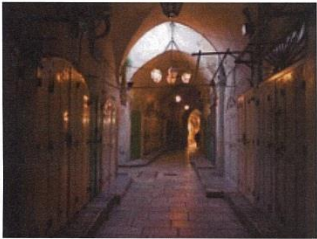
Come join this special group of the Riverside community, July 11 – 24, 2012 for an unforgettable experience as we walk where Jesus walked and visit the places where he healed the sick, taught the multitudes, died on the cross, and rose from the dead over 2,000 years ago.

Retrace the steps of Jesus as we visit Bethlehem, where he was born; Nazareth, his childhood home; the Jordan River, where he was baptized; Capernaum, the center of his ministry in Galilee; and Jerusalem, where he was crucified and resurrected.

This is a rare opportunity for hands-on biblical education and worship in the region where the Judeo-Christian faith experience began.

Friends old and new are joining us for this exciting adventure, and there's a place reserved just for you.

Appendix I



**Bible Walk:
Orientation and Preparation**

A series of orientation workshops have been designed to enable the participant to expand upon the archaeological and theological dimensions of the trip, highlighting key biblical scriptures and sites, discovering social and cultural settings. Also, included is the preparation process for international travel.

This dynamic program is structured to prepare and maximize the participant's encounter of a fun, educational and engaging experience.

For further information please contact:

Laura Harris
Riverside Adult Education Committee
646-236-4936
email: biblewalk2012@yahoo.com

or

David Figueroa
The Riverside Church
Youth and Young Adult Education
212-870-6833
email: dfigueroa@theriversidechurchny.org

pictures courtesy of: www.freeisraelphotos.com

MISSION

The Riverside Church Adult Christian Education Ministry is hosting the 2012 Bible Walk Program, an interactive Bible Study and Retreat where participants will visit and experience the places where Jesus ministered.


This trip is designed to deepen one's spiritual journey by exploring the depths of the bible, from the narratives of the Old Testament to retracing the steps of Jesus.

By placing the events and biblical characters into their social and geographical context, this will illuminate ancient periods and provide compelling insights for participants as they engage in biblical study.

This will be a spiritual enriching experience both for the young and adults.

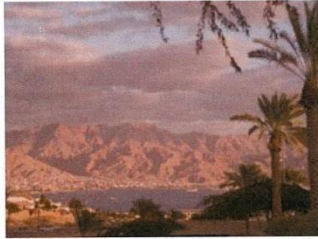
**THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH
ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRY
490 RIVERSIDE DRIVE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10027
DFIGUEROA@THERIVERSIDETCHURCHNY.ORG
212-870-6833
WWW.THERIVERSIDETCHURCHNY.ORG**

BIBLE WALK:
*A Journey from
Riverside to
Ancient Israel*
JULY 11-24, 2012



Garden of Gethsemane

The Riverside Church Adult Christian Education Ministry



ISRAEL

Bible Walk: A Journey from Riverside to Ancient Israel

The Riverside Church Adult Christian Education Ministry is hosting a 13-day tour of Israel, the Land of the Bible.

Come join this special group of the Riverside community, July 11-24, 2012 for an interactive experience as we walk where Jesus walked and visit the places where He healed the sick, taught the multitudes, died on the Cross - and arose 2000 years ago.

Retrace the steps of Jesus as we visit **Nazareth**, Jesus' boyhood home, the **Mount of Beatitudes** where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, and look out over the Sea of Galilee where He stilled the waters. Travel to **Capernaum**, the center of Jesus' ministry in the Galilee, and worship with us in the Garden Tomb where Jesus was laid.

We anticipate sharing in this exciting ministry opportunity with you.

Friends, old and new, are joining us for this rare opportunity, and there's a place reserved just for you.

Spaces are limited, so don't delay!



JERUSALEM

RETRACE THE STEPS OF JESUS

Golan Heights

Bethsaida

Mount Carmel

Capernaum

Ein Gedi

City of David

Masada

Megiddo

Nazareth

Qumran

Sea of Galilee



BETHLEHEM

Package Price

Price is **\$3,800** per person for a **13-day tour**. Price includes:

- roundtrip airfare (Newark Airport)
- hotel (based on double occupancy)
- entrance fees to all sites/activities
- meals
- ground transportation to tour sites

Note:

Few seats still available!
First come first serve

All payments can be made by check, credit card or cash

For further information please contact:

Laura Harris
Executive Director
Riverside Adult Education Committee
646-236-4936
email: biblewalk2012@yahoo.com

Appendix J



Bible Walk: A Journey from Riverside to Ancient Israel July 11-24, 2012

Multifaith Pilgrimage to Israel

The Riverside Church Adult Education Ministry is hosting a 13-day tour of Israel, retracing the steps of Jesus.

Join us for an afternoon luncheon and fellowship as we share the news about this exciting journey.

Retrace the footsteps of Jesus...



Event: Luncheon
When: Sunday, January 29, 2012
Where: Room 411 MLK
Time: 2pm - 4pm
Contact: Laura Harris
biblewalk2012@yahoo.com
646-236-4936

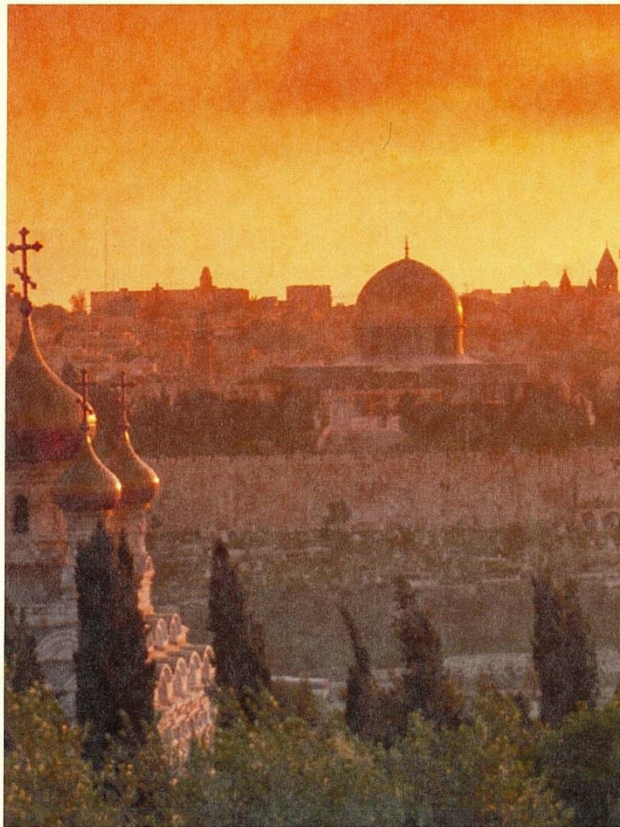


Appendix K

Bible Walk

A journey from Riverside Church to Ancient Israel

Join us for a special Bible Walk prelude for our unique spiritual-archaeological oriented Biblical Adventure through Israel's Most Holy Sites



SUNDAY, JUNE 3RD

Room 411MLK

1:30-3:00 p.m.

Explore

- ☐ JERUSALEM
- ☐ BETHLEHEM
- ☐ HOLY SEPULCHRE
- ☐ MOUNT ZION
- ☐ SEA OF GALILEE
- ☐ VIA DOLOROSA
- ☐ GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

and many more

Presented by:
Rachel Russo, Director
Israel Experience

Our pilgrimage takes place July 11-24, 2012

A few seats are still available!

Contact info: Laura Harris, 646-236-4936

Sponsored by
The Riverside Church Adult Christian Education Ministry
490 Riverside Drive
New York, New York 10027

Appendix L

III. Education

“To learn, grow, and deepen our relationship to God, self, and other.”

As a Church, we intend to foster meaningful outcomes for all the people through a range of programs.

Commission Responsibilities: The Education Commission is responsible for a comprehensive Christian education ministry for the Church, including educational programs for children, youth and adult members of the Church, and other interested persons.

Activities Supporting Education in 2012

Rev. Julie Johnson Staples began providing pastoral leadership to the Ministry of Education in the Fall of 2012, shortly after Rev. Arnold Thomas concluded his ministry at Riverside.

The Ministry of Education celebrates many accomplishments of 2012:

- **Sunday School** participants grew from 46 to 116 in 2011-2012, with plans to continue to enlarge Sunday School classes in 2012-2013.
- **“Friday Night Live”** and its counterpart on Sunday, programs for pre-teens and teens, have grown steadily over the past year, from about a dozen participants at the beginning to over 50 in the fall of 2012.
- **Vacation Bible School**, held here for the first time in many years, attracted 49 children and teens ages 6 – 17.
- **The 21st Annual Career Day and College Fair 2012**, “Being Better than You Believe,” attracted over 400 participants for workshops on a wide range of career options.
- **A mission trip to Israel** in July gathered 35 for its pilgrimage, including four teens from the youth programs.
- **Bible Study Classes**, held on Sunday mornings before church, attract about 20 participants for each session.
- **Language Program.** For more than 50 years, Riversiders have volunteered to strengthen the conversational skills of visitors to the church who wish to improve their spoken English. About 20 – 30 eager learners are paired with mentors, who gain as much as they give from their interactions.
- **Toastmasters.** Riverside also offers a “Toastmaster” class to 20 – 30 people per session who wish to increase their confidence as public speakers.

Riverside offers periodic lectures and conversations on a wide range of topics. In 2012 there was an in-depth program on HIV/AIDS and advances in the field, a panel discussion about homelessness in the LGBTQ community, and an evening devoted to viewing and discussing a documentary about the Christian mystic Simone Weil, to name a few. During Rev. Phelps’ “Wings of the Dove” sermon series, up to 20 people gathered each Wednesday before Space for Grace to converse with the pastor and one another about an upcoming sermon topic. An annual movie series brings stimulating opportunities to the Church and broader communities to grapple with issues of the day. Any day of the week, Riverside is offering educational, faith-building opportunities to both congregants and the wider community.

Page 6

Appendix M

The “Beloved Community Experience” was initiated in the fall of 2012 to create an opportunity for participants to explore faith and spirituality in relation to The Riverside Church and beyond. Twice a year in 2013 and beyond, up to 25 people will be able to join in this journey of discovery and commitment. The Education Ministry is now looking at its current offerings and working with the Education Commission on possible new directions to bring more opportunities for study, enrichment, and faith development.



Riversiders on Mission Trip to Israel

Education: Plans for 2013

In 2013 the ministry will enthusiastically direct its energies toward continued growth in the Children, Youth and Families division, led by C/Y/F director James Singletary. Bible studies and other offerings for adults will be re-shaped and expanded. In addition to a re-launch of the 4th floor Children’s Library and renewed attention to recruitment in the Young Adult ministry known as “The Way,” the ministry also endeavors to partner with New York Theological Seminary to develop a teacher training and teacher certification program.

In 2013 the ministry will be served by two new program coordinators. Also, the ministry’s weekday administrative assistant will be joined by a part-time weekend assistant whose duties will include handling Church School donation and attendance records, assisting Church School teachers in set-up, and assisting the whole team. Finally, the ministry will be augmented by up to four seminary interns during the program year.

2013 Budget for Education \$592,130

This total includes the salaries of the Interim Minister of Education, Rev. Julie Johnson Staples, the salary of the director of Children, Youth and Families, James Singletary, and the support team for this ministry.

2013 Projected Funding Allocated for Education:

Giving	\$	325,350
Program Income	\$	11,400
Donor Restricted Funds	\$	134,800
Portfolio	\$	120,580
Total Funding	\$	592,130

Appendix N



Bible Walk Talk Back

Hear about our life changing experience

Our Journey to Israel

Today 1:00pm

Multi-Purpose Room

Experience Israel

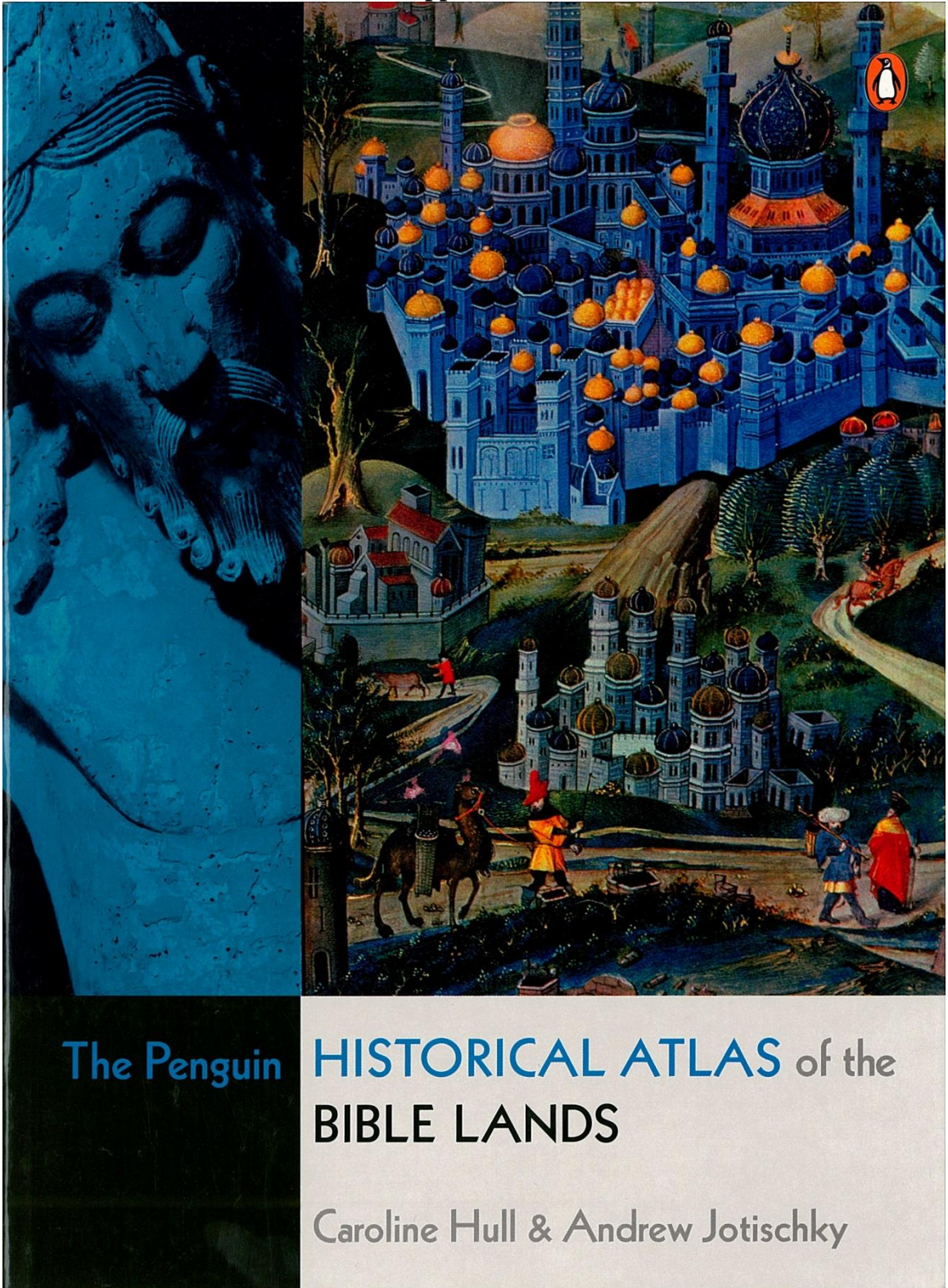
Join us for fellowship and food

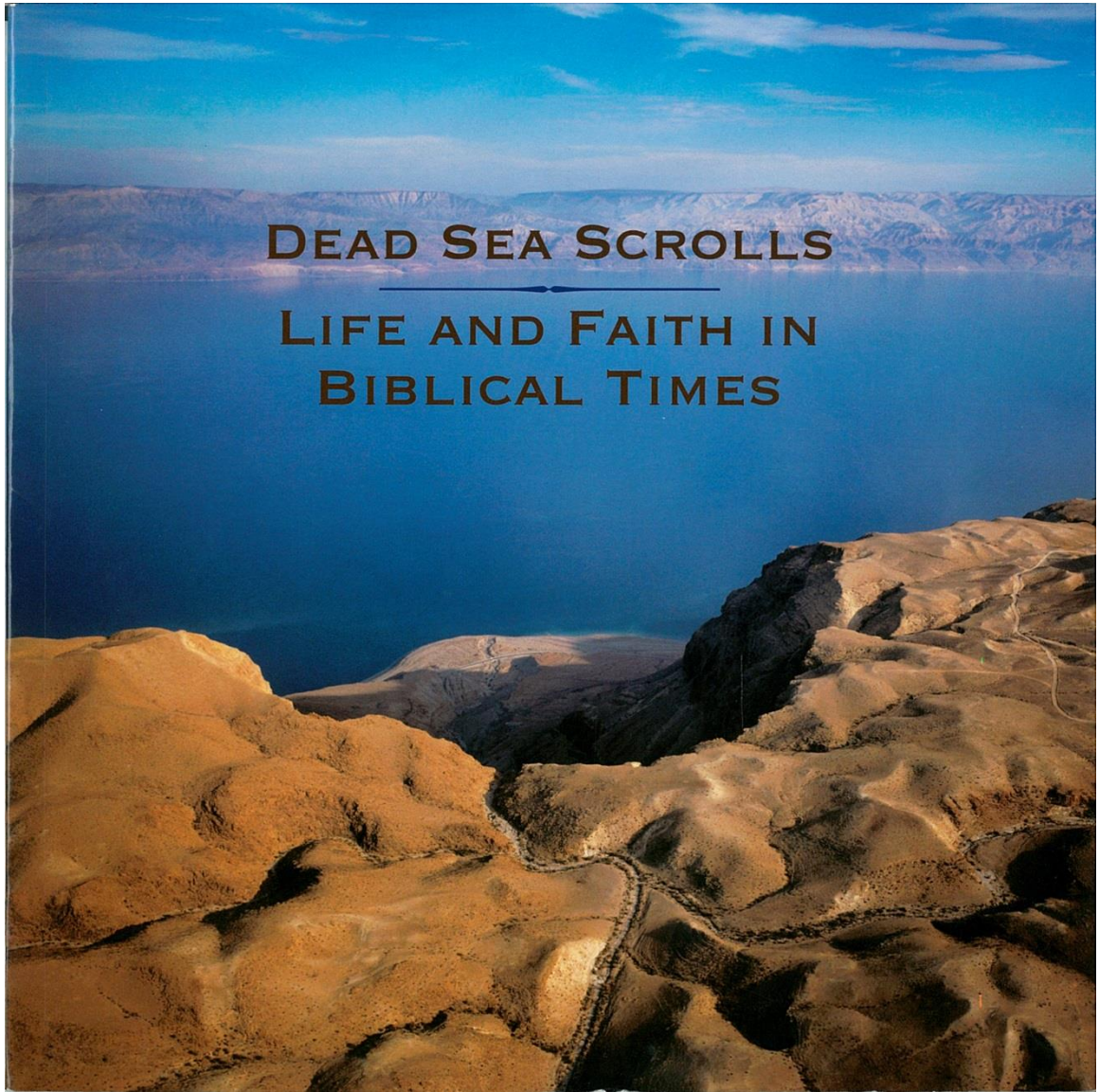
November 4th 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Multi Purpose Room

Bible Walk

For further information contact:
Laura Harris
biblewalk2012@yahoo.com





Appendix P

The Bible Walk: A Journey from the Riverside Church to Ancient Israel trip itinerary is in blue type.

Wednesday July 11th, 2012 Departure by plane from New York City.



Thursday July 12th: Welcome to Israel!
Jerusalem overview and Bethlehem
Arrive early morning from night flight.



Overview at the Haas Promenade including group
prayer meeting and welcome ceremony
Visit to Bethlehem including the Church of the Nativity and the Shepherds Fields

Friday July 13th: Judean Desert and Masada

Travel through the Judean Desert; Masada - Ancient Jewish fortress
Ein Gedi Oasis – nature walk; The Dead Sea and
Mineral Beach Qumran – Site of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls;
Travel north to the Galilee via the Jordan Valley Road
Kaser el Yahud - Baptismal Site near Jericho (time for baptisms for those who wish)



Saturday July 14th: Christian sites around the Sea of Galilee

Morning boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, Ginosar, Tabgha

Mount of Beatitudes Capernaum Hike: Mount Arbel

Dinner in Hotel followed by an Israel update session to gain an understanding of what is happening in the country at that moment, both politically and culturally.



Sunday July 15th: The Golan Heights– Israel and her neighbors.
Nature Walk in Tel Dan; Caesarea Philippi (Banias) nature walk;
Olive Oil Press in Katzrin, Mount Ben Tal – overview of Syria



Monday July 16th: The Galilee
Safed- a visit the narrow cobblestone alleys; the mystical center of Kabbala
during the 16th century and home to great rabbinic scholars
“Nazareth Village”, Tel Megiddo
Meeting with the Galilee Circus a youth coexistence project;
Beth Shearim - site of Paul's teacher



Tuesday July 17th: The Carmel region and Caesarea

Mount Carmel- The story of Elijah and look out over the Jezreel Valley
from the Carmelite monastery.

Tree planting in the Carmel Forest, Caesarea Roman Theatre and Hippodrome



Wednesday July 18th:

Hecht Museum Haifa University; Neot Kedumim: Educational biblical workshop
Overview of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives
Visit to Ethiopian Absorption center in Mevaseret
Performance: Jerusalem's Citadel, known as the Tower of David



Thursday July 19th: Jerusalem in Antiquity

Western Wall Tunnels Mount of Olives: Pater Noster Church of All Nations
Garden of Gethsemane; St Anne's Church & the Pools of Bethesda
PM Lunch in the Jewish Quarter; Jewish Quarter Tour;
Jerusalem Archaeological Park; Western Wall Plaza



Friday July 20th: Memory and Reflection

Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum;

Visit to *Har Herzl*, the burial site of Theodore Herzl,
the father of modern political Zionism, and the National Cemetery.
Visit to Ethiopian Church; Friday night prayer service in a Conservative
synagogue in the neighborhood of East Talpyiot;
Traditional dinner at the Synagogue with members and the Rabbi.



Saturday 21st July: Christian Jerusalem

Temple Mount/Dome of the Rock Muslim; Quarter The Arab *souk* (market)

Via Dolorosa - Walk the way of the Cross.

Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Garden Tomb Time for reflection and prayer

Evening walk and dinner in Ein Kerem; Birthplace of John the Baptist



Sunday 22nd July: Mount Zion

City of David tour including option to walk through Hezekiya's tunnel
Siloam Pool; Mount Zion; King David's Tomb
Room of Last Supper St. Peter's in Gallicantu
Evening in Emek Rafayim/ Mamilla Mall /Ben Yehuda Street



Monday July 23rd: Ancient Port Modern City

The Israel Museum and the Shrine of the Book

Travel to Jaffa; Tour in old Jaffa;

Short walking tour through Tel Aviv's; Rothschild Boulevard
including a Bauhaus Tour.

Independence Hall where Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion
proclaimed the State on May 14, 1948







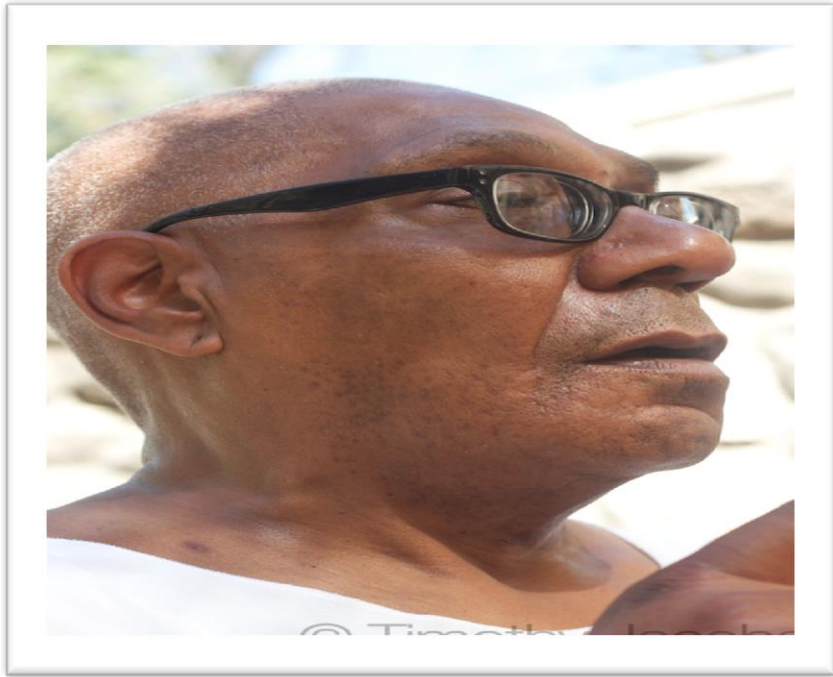












Overnight: on the plane

Tuesday July 24th: Arrive in New York City

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